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Someone needs to train those BPO drivers!

Training the chauffeurs, a small segment of the entire gamut of opportunities, holds a potential of Rs 780 cr. by the year 2010

/Binesh Kutty

Looking at the repeated reports of rash driving and bad behavior of BPO cab chauffeurs, one cannot help but think, "someone needs to train and keep a check on them!" Is there an opportunity lying in doing just that? Who else would be better to ask than the father of Indian BPO industry himself, Raman Roy? When asked, Roy said, "Getting a driver's license today is very easy. However, if we had licensing rules that ensured that the chauffeurs were fully trained, then this would not have been an opportunity. Unfortunately, they are not trained. So is





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The 600,000 strong workforce of the BPO industry is set to increase four times in the next four years. Training them all will be a mammoth opportunity.

But people have to understand that it has to be customer-focused training on the lines of educating and training in the fields of mortgage, insurance, credit card, fraud management... "

**RAMAN ROY, CMD,
QUATRO BPO SOLUTIONS**

it an opportunity? Yes!" Going further, he adds, "If someone came out with a certification that says, the chauffer had X kind of a training, which ensured that he followed the rules and did all the right things, would we, as a company, only take these certified chauffeurs? Yes, we would. So would other companies. But this is not training for the sake of training, so the question is that whether one is able to set out a standard and certification for this training."

As far as drivers' training institutes go, there are a few players already

in this space. Maruti Udyog Limited, who have teamed up with Road Transport Office (RTO) and various other government bodies. Many, including radio cab operators, use their service. V-Link, a fleet management company, recently launched Meru Driver Training Academy in Mumbai. This is again in association with the Road Transport Office. They offer a week's training focusing on safe driving, customer service, basic technical knowledge of the vehicle, brief topography of the city, emergency respons-

es and roles and responsibilities of a driver.

However, there are certain hurdles for such institutes to take off. Such training would want the chauffeurs to dedicate themselves for an entire week, six to eight hours per day. Hence, convincing the chauffeurs to undergo this is one big problem that institutes like Meru Drivers Academy is currently facing. There are food coupons distributed free to the chauffeurs coming in for the training, but even those who run the academies know



that this is not the actual fix for the problem. Moreover, the fee for each chauffeur could be any sum between four to six thousand rupees. This actually says that voluntary enrollment is far from possible. The BPOs need to opt for and encourage their fleet vendors for such training programs to improve the situation.

MAIA Intelligence, caters to the business intelligence needs of many BPOs and provides software solutions for performance management, like fleet management, time entry for corporates and such. "Our solution helps these BPOs track performance, like to see which time slot has the maximum



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**ASHUTOSH ATRAY,
VP - TRAINING & RESOURCES,
V-LINK TAXIS**

load, do the schedules need alterations, and such," says Sanjay Mehta, CEO of MAIA. Mehta adds, "Since BPOs employ the services of several fleet vendors, the performance pressure points could be creating a vendor index and analyzing whether on-time performance is what's needed, is it the cost, is it the feedback from the employees, and so on." This would let the BPOs identify the top performing vendors, and the operations head can sign future SLAs (service level agreements) based upon this.

Talking about BPO chauffeurs, Ashutosh Atray, Vice-President - Training & Resources, V-Link Taxis says, "It is a very demanding job, where a chauffeur might just end up doing a 24 hours' run. On top of it, they need to meet the timeline; even a five-minute delay will affect their performance rating, and incentives." This is true to quite an extent. Many BPOs follow either a punitive or incentive way of dealing with performance. In the punitive way, a chauffeur will end up being 'fined' for not reporting back in a given timeline, hence affecting the performance sheet of the vendor he is working for. Even if there is an incentive approach, the chauffeur will try his level best to make it back before time. Both these approaches lead to rash driving and overworking to either earn more or to make up for the income lost. What is the fix for this? Roy enlightens, "It is a matter of setting up a process. I have worked with companies where we did not have incentive/punitive measures to get maximum performance. We had GPS-GPRS devices installed, and we knew precisely where the vehicle was. Training the chauffeurs is only a small component."

Technology too can play a pivotal role in improving chauffeur and fleet-related problems. For example, in Quattro, they have a GPS-GPRS tracking device installed in their fleet. Chauffeurs going off-route, and problems in these lines are taken care of with this system. However, there is another interesting scoop. According to an insider in the industry, the use of biometric devices can minimize some



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MAIA INTELLIGENCE**

of the problems faced. The device can instantly identify and report whether a chauffeur has been blacklisted previously for any reason. Overworking chauffeurs too somewhat leads to negligent driving, so the device will also be equipped to identify and report if the driver has done a shift of more than eight hours. This is currently being implemented across the branches of a BPO company. Opportunity lies unexploited in someone creating and maintaining a centralized database of chauffeurs in such a way that all the BPOs can pull data from them.

**RAMAN ROY
ON NEAR FUTURE TRENDS
IN THE BPO INDUSTRY**

"In 2008, we are going to see a lot of consolidation and maturity in high end processing. There will be a big issue of the rupee dollar rate, and of attrition. It is going to be a mixed bag of good and bad things. Right now, we in India only participate in 2% of the global market; 98% is still left untapped.

Quattro goes beyond the existing. We are taking this industry to the next level; we are setting up new things. Like, we set up risk management, nobody offered that; and so have we set up things for fraud control, legal, mortgage, and so on. I have 8 areas in production; I have 28 areas that are under evaluation. So, the opportunity is huge."



DARE/estimates

As on 2007

Total number of BPO employees	600,000
Number of employees using cabs (assume 50%)	300,000
Ratio of cabs:employees (1:8)	37,500
Chauffeurs required each cab / 24 hours	4
Adjustment for attrition @ 30%	45,000
Total number of chauffeurs at present	195,000

Projection for 2010

Total number of BPO employees (Growth = 4 times)	2,400,000
Number of employees using cabs (assume 50%)	1,200,000
Ratio of cabs:employees (1:8)	150,000
Chauffeurs required for each cab / 24 hours	4
Adjustment for attrition @ 30%	180,000
Projected number of chauffeurs in 2010	780,000

Training, Monitoring, and Certification Charges

Fee per chauffeur for a one week's training	5,000 Rs
Training refresh cycle in a year	2
Annual market size in 2010	780 Cr Rs

According to Roy, the BPO industry stands at a strong 600,000 workforce today. This is potentially going to increase three to four times in the next four years. That would be a mind numbing increase of 2,400,000 more people coming into the industry, and they will need training. Will this be an opportunity? "It will be a mammoth opportunity," says Roy. "But people have to understand that it has to be customer-focused training in the lines of educating and training in the fields of mortgage, insurance, credit card, fraud management etc. All these skills are not readily available, so people have to create these competencies if they were to start training."

We ran some numbers to put an estimate to measure the possible market size of just the BPO chauffeur training space in the year 2010. Turns out, even in a very conservative estimate, the market size will be 780 crores, if not more. Now that is just a small fragment of the huge opportunities space in the making.

