Chapter 7

Business to Rural:
The Future of IT Outsourcing

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the author investigates the socio-economic impact of the organization on the life of the common people of Uttarakhand, a Simayal village. The author also explores the salient feature or uniqueness of B2R that differentiates it from other urban BPOs in India. The author went through the different processes followed by B2R and highlights the modification they have made from their urban counterparts to determine whether they are following the best practices or not, and if not, where they are lagging. Analyzing the market trends, the author questions if the concept of rural BPO can be an alternative to the highly growing cost structure of the urban BPO sector. By means of local reference, the author focuses on the way the work culture and environment bring about differences in the productivity of the BPO. Finally, the author evaluates the growth story of B2R—how it could become so successful under the initially unfavorable conditions of the remote Himalayan village.

While city-breeds like us were looking for a house in the serene mountains, hoards of talented youth from the region were migrating to bigger cities to earn a living. Dhiraj Dolwani (CEO-B2R Technologies, Engineering post-graduate from BITS, Pilani, with 17 years of experience in the industry)

HISTORY

Around 3 years back, Mr. Dhiraj Dolwani was on a trip to Uttarakhand. The nature lover visited several known/unknown places near Nainital, Bhimtal, Mukteswar, and while looking for a holiday home in the Himalayas, the idea of set-
ting up a rural BPO where he can employ local young graduates in the hills came up in his mind. Because he always thinks that a peaceful mind cultivates dynamic ideas.

He discussed the idea with Venkatesh Iyer, an IIM-A graduate and an ex-colleague, and was readily accepted for implementation. The two set about giving shape to the concept and in five months, B2R (an acronym for Business to Rural) Technologies emerged (see Figures 1 and 2).\textsuperscript{1}

**GROWTH STORY**

B2R Technologies, operating from a non-descript Orakhan (near Mukteshwar in Uttarakhand), is purely a rural BPO delivery center which runs on a hub-and-spoke business model to cater to domestic clients at relatively lower costs.

The company provides services from finance to insurance, retail to travel and telecom to publishing sectors, and aims to challenge leading BPO organizations by galvanizing orders from domestic and overseas clients.

Mr. Dolwani and Mr. Iyer are confident that as the West begins to cut costs increasingly, smaller, low-cost BPOs hold better promise. “We are talking to a few international clients to procure work in finance and legal processing,” discloses Iyer, co-founder of B2R.

B2R’s motto is: “Bring work to where people are, rather than people to where work is.” And Nasscom estimates underscore the soundness of their adage. According to the software industry association, there are about 5,000 seats or jobs in 50 non-urban BPOs—a figure that is set to rise to a whopping 150,000 by 2015. According to Dolwani B2R will have 6,000 of them. Their modus operandi is to keep it small and far-flung. “We don’t go to places where the infrastructure is already present. Instead, we take the infrastructure along with us to the remote areas,” says Dolwani. Of course, there are problems: the delays, the permits, and the red tape.

B2R Tech has already got the first part of funding, from Avishkar Microfinance Venture Capital Fund. And plans are afoot to create 60-70 such delivery centers, each with around 70 seat capacity, across Uttarakhand.

Their social commitment apart, B2R Tech has registered a 20% growth in revenue terms, on a quarterly basis. The group has already employed over 100 graduates for various prospective projects and is honing their communication and technical skills.

Figures are in their favor as Uttarakhand has a literacy rate of 75% and the land prices as well as infrastructure cost are lower than most metropolitan cities. “The human resource skill is readily available, but the opportunities are scarce. We are trying to create a small difference by our own way,” says Mr. Iyer.\textsuperscript{2}

*Figure 1. IT process outsourcing in the lap of the Himalayas*

*Figure 2. Inside B2R systems office, one of the finest workplaces to enjoy worklife*
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