

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT



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INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA  
يُؤْتِيهِ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

# The IIUM Journal of Case Studies in Management

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- MARDI's Technical Training Centre: Dealing with Dilemma 1  
**Rozhan Abu Dardak & Farzana Quoquab Habib**  
*Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI)*
- 
- ◆ At the Crossroads of Career and Camaraderie 10  
**Mawaddah Alias**  
*Graduate School of Management, International Islamic University Malaysia*  
**Arif Hassan**  
*Department of Business Administration, International Islamic University Malaysia*
- 
- ◆ Succeed or Succumb? 18  
**Whahaedea Samai**  
*Graduate School of Management, International Islamic University Malaysia*  
**Arif Hassan**  
*Department of Business Administration, International Islamic University Malaysia*
- 
- ◆ Dialing the Right Number 25  
**Richa Misra & Shalini Srivastava**  
*Jaipuria Institute of Management, Delhi, India*
- 





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## Contents

MARDI's Technical Training Centre: Dealing with Dilemma Rozhan Abu Dardak & Farzana Quoquab Habib <i>Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI)</i>	1
◆	
At the Crossroads of Career and Camaraderie Mawaddah Alias Graduate School of Management, International Islamic University Malaysia Arif Hassan Department of Business Administration, International Islamic University Malaysia	10
◆	
Succeed or Succumb? Whahaedea Samai <i>Graduate School of Management, International Islamic University Malaysia</i> Arif Hassan <i>Department of Business Administration, International Islamic University Malaysia</i>	18
◆	
Dialing the Right Number Richa Misra & Shalini Srivastava <i>Jaipuria Institute of Management, Delhi, India</i>	25
◆	

**Teaching Notes** of the Case Studies, published in this issue, are available **ONLY** to lecturers and trainers. Please send your request to the Chief Editor ([arifh@iium.edu.my](mailto:arifh@iium.edu.my)/[arif.hassan@gmail.com](mailto:arif.hassan@gmail.com)) giving details of your job position and institutional affiliation using your institutional email address.

## IIUM Journal of Case Studies in Management

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### Aim and Scope of the Journal

The *IIUM Journal of Case Studies in Management* is an internationally refereed journal published twice yearly by the Graduate School of Management, International Islamic University Malaysia. The journal is dedicated to the development and promotion of case studies in the field of management and related disciplines for the purpose of enhancing our knowledge and understanding in the areas. Cases selected for publication are expected to deal with important issues related to the discipline, which may be used, among others, by instructors of Master of Business Administration and Master of Management programmes. Special consideration will be given to cases that deal with management issues in the Asia-Pacific region. Cases based on both research and secondary sources, will be considered. Also, papers on case writing, case teaching and case analysis will be accepted for publication. Occasionally the journal will publish empirical papers on current issues in management.

## **Editorial Note**

It gives me pleasure to present this issue. Please accept our apology for this delay in publication which was primarily due to a lack of quality submissions. This journal was launched to fulfil the need for locally developed case studies with its aim being to publish decision-focussed teaching cases which would enrich students' learning of management concepts and practices. Those who are involved with teaching management courses have always expressed the need for cases with a local flavour in relation to context, issues, and problems. We also know that the life of a case study is quite short as the conditions and the context in which organisations operate, change rapidly. As such there is always a need for case studies illustrating the current environment.

This issue of the journal presents four case studies. The first describes issues related to a technical training centre which was established in Malaysia to provide training on technologies to farmers, small and medium enterprise owners/managers, and to the public. This case demonstrates the importance of client's satisfaction to sustain a business/project. It also illustrates that core service do not work in isolation. Rather, the physical environment and supplementary services also need to be of a sufficient standard to attract and retain customers. Furthermore the case study stresses the importance of assessing the project's strengths and weaknesses to understand its feasibility and to take necessary steps for improvement. Finally, it emphasises proper planning as well as the need for a promotional strategy to attract and retain customers.

The second case study presents a scenario, of a hard-working, talented and competitive employee who is seen to be recognised and rewarded for her efforts by her superiors. Written against the backdrop of the telecommunications industry operating in Malaysia, it tells the story of a hardworking and talented employee. This case elucidates the fact that for achieving success, recognition and excellence in an organisation two factors are of substantial importance. Besides personal attributes of an employee such as hard-work, competitiveness, talent and skills, the presence of a good leader who is inspirational, trusting, and supportive is an important factor. The case study clearly depicts that when these two factors combine, they bring about highly positive developments for the employee as well as for the entire organisation. However, difficult choices have to be made by both the manager and the employee when opportunities knock at the door.

The third case illustrates two different styles of leadership and their resultant effects on employees' work attitude and morale and behaviour. It attempts to show how a bossy, authoritative, prejudiced, close-minded, and destructively critical leader can harm an employee's morale, lower his/her productivity and even force him/her to quit the job; whereas on the other hand, a participative, open-minded, supportive, amicable, and friendly leader can boost an employee's morale and enhance his/her motivation to work harder, while being committed to the organisation.

The fourth case study tells the story of a company from India known as 'Just Dial' which provides a free local search website. It did so by incorporating the best practices in website designing and search engine optimisation techniques. Maintaining a leadership position in this type of industry is a difficult proposition and the case provides emerging issues and challenges that the service provider has to deal with. This case deals with a host of management issues such as innovation in technology, elements for an effective database, web site performance and customer centric approach to deal with strong competitors.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the authors for their publication. Also a note of appreciation to colleagues at the Graduate School of Management as well as at the Faculty of Economics & Management Sciences for their encouragement, support, and contribution.

As always we will be looking forward to your support, comments and feedback.

**Arif Hassan**  
*Chief Editor*



# Case Study 1 **MARDI's Technical Training Centre: Dealing with Dilemma**

**Rozhan Abu Dardak<sup>1</sup>**

**Farzana Quoquab Habib<sup>2</sup>**

*Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI)*

**Abstract:** This case illustrates issues related to the viability of MARDI's Technical Training Centre (MTTC). MARDI conducts research and develops new technologies that can increase the productivity and efficiency of agricultural commodities, food processing, and agro-based industries. In a move to transfer these technologies and new knowledge, MARDI had established MTTC to effect this transfer through the provision of training programs to farmers, small and medium enterprise owners/managers, and to the public. However, the allocated grant for MTTC was about to finish at the end of the year 2010. The management of MARDI then decided to evaluate objectively MTTC's program in terms of success, failure, strengths and weakness to make an informed decision on whether to re-invest in this project.

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## **BACKGROUND**

The Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI) established its technical training centre in 1995. Prior to its establishment as an institute, it was a training unit under the Technical Services Division at MARDI head quarters in Serdang. The main functions of MARDI's Technical Training Centre (MTTC) were to provide training programs for farmers, small and medium enterprise owners/managers, and for the public so as to transfer the technologies MARDI had developed. More often than not, MTTC offered courses related to skills building, particularly on product development, agricultural technologies, food processing, entrepreneurship skills, project management and quality system (see Appendix A).

MARDI provided a grant amounting to RM250,000 to MTTC in 1995 as its startup operational capital. However, expenditure on salaries of the MTTC staff was underwritten by MARDI. MARDI expected MTTC to fulfill its functions as a technology transfer office and at the same time generate income towards self-sufficiency. However, the grant was about to finish at the end of 2010 and questions arose about

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reinvestment for a continuation of this project. When the MTTC management requested additional grants, the management of MARDI decided to analyse the performance of MTTC before making a decision on whether to allocate the additional grant and let MTTC continue with training functions.

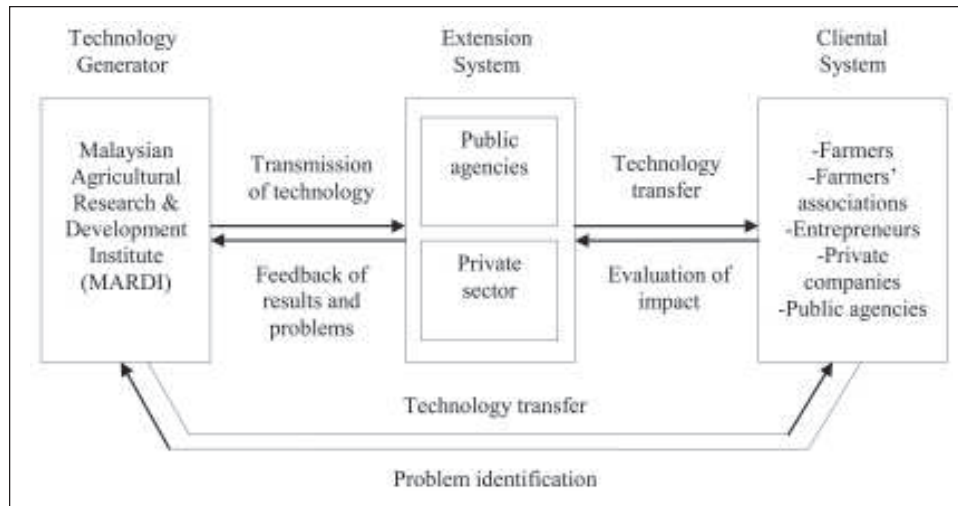
## **MARDI'S TECHNICAL TRAINING CENTRE**

MARDI is one of the most important agriculture research institutions in Malaysia. It is a statutory body under the Malaysian Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-based Industries. It was established in 1969 with the aim of generating new technologies for the development of the agricultural sector in Malaysia. Every year, MARDI generates more than 100 new technologies and/or new knowledge towards the enhancement of agriculture and agro-based industries. Moreover, MARDI conducts and promotes its research and development in specific areas, such as biotechnology, horticulture, industrial crops, mechanisation and automation and food processing. It receives funds and research grants from the government, international institutions and private firms to conduct research and develop new technologies that can increase the productivity and efficiency of agricultural commodities, food processing, and agro-based industries.

Technology transfer is MARDI's second core function. In this regard, MARDI established MTTC to carry out technical training and organize seminars. Its main objectives are:

- To enhance and accelerate the application of new technologies by smallholders and traditional producers;
- To develop technology-based SMEs in agriculture and related bio-based industries; and
- To enhance and accelerate technology commercialisation among corporate/private companies and other clients.

The technologies generated by MARDI are transferred to its stakeholders through several approaches: (i) extension agencies to farmers, breeders and entrepreneurs of food-processing industries, (ii) licensing its property right to private firms, and/or (iii) through technical training and seminars. The technology transfer system in MARDI has evolved from a simple dissemination of technology through technical papers presented at seminars and conferences to technical training and finally to a complete technology transfer system package. Generally, R&D outcomes are not directly transferred from MARDI to its stakeholders. At the initial stage, it is transferred to the extension agencies such as to the Department of Agriculture (DOA), Farmers' Organization Authority (FOA) and private firms. It is only after going through this stage that the technology is transferred to stakeholders or users such as farmers, farmers associations, entrepreneurs and public agencies. In other words, technology is transferred from MARDI to extension systems before it finally reaches its cliental system or technology users. However, in certain cases, especially in the food processing technology, it is transferred directly to the entrepreneurs. The direct transfer strategy



**Figure 1:** Process flow of technology transfer at MARDI

Source: Rozhan Abu Dardak (2011)

of the technology is either through joint venture or collaboration with private firms or consultancy services or through the licensing of its intellectual property (IP) rights or through technical training. MARDI takes different approaches to transfer the technologies generated. For example, the consultancy service approach aims to develop new small and medium enterprises by using improved technology, while the licensing intellectual property rights approach is used for transferring a totally new technology to established small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The technical training, on the other hand, provides hands-on information and practical training related to new technologies developed by MARDI. Technical training is the most common and popular technology transfer approach used by MARDI in the case of farmers, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders. The process of technology transfer carried out by MARDI is illustrated in Figure 1.<sup>[1]</sup>

As such, MARDI develops, transfers and commercialises technologies and services that are needed by the nation in its efforts to develop agriculture and related bio-based industries into a modern, commercial, innovative and competitive sector.

## NOBODY IS PERFECT

The main service offered by MTTC is its training programs. The major challenge faced by MTTC is to position itself as a quality training provider and to gain the loyalty of its clients. Every year, MTTC conducts about 40 technical training sessions at its complex in Serdang, MARDI research stations or at hotels throughout Malaysia. MTTC designs its training programs based on the technologies that MARDI wants to transfer to its clients. The technology-push approach was chosen to ensure that the technologies



generated by MARDI are received and used by the clients. As one of MARDI's functions is to transfer its technologies through training, MTTC aimed to train as many participants as possible. MTTC believed that its clients always needed the new technologies and would accept whatever technologies are transferred to them. However, MTTC ignored the need for understanding the focal needs of its clients and thus, MTTC never conducted any marketing research to understand the courses required by the clients.

MTTC did not set any specific standard for the modules that were being conducted. Training courses were conducted arbitrarily since different trainers used to teach the course based on their availability and convenience. The course or training modules were designed based on training coordinators' perceptions, and not in consultation with the clients. Moreover, no proper plans were drawn up to attract its potential customers and to retain its present ones. The information extracted from MTTC's Annual Report 2010 is shown in the Table 1. <sup>[2]</sup> Table 1 indicates that in 2001, MTTC conducted 20 courses in total with the total number of participants being 615. The number of courses and total number of participants had seen a steady annual increase until 2006. However, in 2007 the annual participation growth rate decreased significantly on a yearly basis (see Table 1). This rate began to increase again from the year 2008 and at the end of 2010, 113 courses had been conducted with a total of 2524 participants, with the annual participation growth rate reaching 28.58%.

A majority of the participants was sponsored by government agencies. They were staff of agencies who were responsible for extension work. Some of the entrepreneurs were also sponsored by government agencies under the entrepreneurship development programs. For example, the Ministry of Rural Development sponsored more than 100

**Table 1:** Number of courses conducted, number of participants and annual participation growth rate from 2000 to 2010.

	Year										
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
• Number of courses conducted	14	20	24	30	35	44	47	51	55	79	113
• Number of participants											
Government agencies	375	490	550	577	689	710	766	825	871	1013	1232
- International	0	4	2	34	15	8	7	0	5	23	53
- MARDI's staff	0	37	70	101	127	220	285	330	374	385	389
- Private or individuals	30	54	50	67	54	65	67	63	77	105	129
- SMEs	20	30	70	97	147	200	230	242	263	437	721
• Total number of participants	425	615	742	876	1032	1203	1355	1460	1590	1963	2524
• Annual growth rate (%)	-	44.71	20.65	18.06	17.81	16.57	12.64	7.75	8.90	23.46	28.58

Source: MTTC Annual Report 2000-2010

participants from 2005 to 2010 under the entrepreneurship development programs, and the Ministry of Defense sponsored 30 ex-army members every year from 2007 under the training for trainers program. There were also some 15-20% of participants who paid the training fees themselves since they were walk-in-participants from all over Malaysia. They came to know about the training courses conducted by MTTC through advertisements in the newspapers and radio, brochures and promotions during MARDI's events. Usually, when MARDI introduced a new technology, it would be launched by political personalities such as the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry or at least a Deputy Minister. It would then be followed by a press conference and this would be highlighted in most of the local media. Articles about the new technologies would also be published in journals and magazines. Eventually, the whole activity would work as a promotional effort for MTTC's training programs. In this way, the public would get to know about the technologies generated by MARDI.

However, after nine years, less than 10% of participants had come back to participate in advanced or new courses. In other words, the participants were not loyal to MTTC. Records showed that there were very few participants who had actually returned to attend the second modules conducted by MTTC. For instance, MTTC conducted an elementary course in landscape design and management. It then conducted an advanced course on the same subject with the focus on hard-landscape such as cement faros. However, it was revealed that the participants were all new. Participants who had attended the elementary course had declined the offer of attending the advanced course.

MTTC derived its main income from the course fees and fees paid for other facilities like room rental, cafeteria and others. The lesser number of participants had resulted in low revenue. Moreover, from 2003 to 2005, MTTC's fee collection did not result in significant profit since it failed to understand customers' needs and expectations.<sup>[3][4][5]</sup> However, MTTC's profit started to increase again from 2006.<sup>[6]</sup> The financial statement for MTTC is shown in Table 2.

## LEARNING FROM ERRORS

When MARDI decided to set up the MTTC, it was incorporated with the development of a new training centre complex. The new MTTC complex which was planned to be completed in 2003 was only delivered by the contractor in early 2004 and has been used since the middle of year 2004. The new complex consisted of a hostel block with 75 rooms; a block for training facilities consisting of six training rooms, two lecture halls, a cafeteria, a prayer room and a block of sports facilities. The new complex, (MARDI retained two blocks of dorm hostels), could accommodate a maximum number of 250 participants. In addition, the whole complex could house 350 participants in a day, an increase of more than 100 participants, compared to the old complex. Moreover, in order to provide better facilities, MTTC had arranged fully air conditioned buses and classrooms for its trainees.

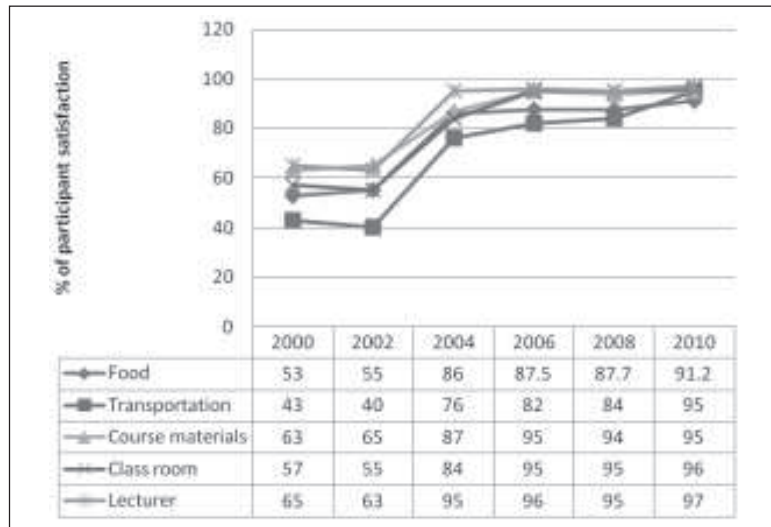
**Table 2:** MTTC's financial statement for 2000 to 2010

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Revenue											
• Course fee	284,750	571,340	627,750	652,320	720,110	929,500	988,240	1,025,130	1,151,150	1,237,350	1,367,110
• Rental of rooms, halls, & cafeteria	34,200	32,120	35,570	40,020	42,730	49,860	51,330	62,550	75,610	80,790	84,240
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>318,950</b>	<b>603,460</b>	<b>663,320</b>	<b>692,340</b>	<b>762,840</b>	<b>979,360</b>	<b>1,039,570</b>	<b>1,087,680</b>	<b>1,226,760</b>	<b>1,318,140</b>	<b>1,451,350</b>
Expenditure											
• Course materials (raw materials, teaching notes)	127,500	222,600	387,500	405,300	435,650	445,320	450,110	465,120	490,750	550,220	585,150
• Lecturer and facilitator allowances	42,500	74,200	152,500	245,800	301,770	480,200	490,550	501,100	570,000	620,400	631,060
• Utilities	6,375	11,130	16,125	18,225	20,350	21,865	22,330	23,115	23,220	24,020	24,555
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>176,375</b>	<b>307,930</b>	<b>556,125</b>	<b>669,325</b>	<b>757,770</b>	<b>947,385</b>	<b>962,990</b>	<b>989,335</b>	<b>1,083,970</b>	<b>1,119,640</b>	<b>1,240,765</b>
<b>Net Profit</b>	<b>142,575</b>	<b>295,530</b>	<b>107,195</b>	<b>23,015</b>	<b>5,070</b>	<b>31,975</b>	<b>76,580</b>	<b>98,345</b>	<b>142,790</b>	<b>198,500</b>	<b>210,585</b>

Source: MTTC Annual Report 2000-2010

In 2002, MARDI embarked on its MS ISO 9000: 2000 quality system and included the technical training program as one of the core processes. MARDI was awarded with MS ISO 9001: 2000 certification in year 2002.<sup>[7]</sup> MARDI then re-organised the structure of MTTC completely so as to change its former image of “government based training centre” to a ‘corporate academic institution’. In 2004, MARDI appointed a new manager and four training coordinators to manage MTTC. It had also employed a fresh marketing graduate to look after the marketing aspects of the centre. MTTC also took the measure of employing researchers from other research centers as its temporary lecturers or training consultants. They acted as the technology generators or experts in their specific research areas, such as horticulture, biotechnology, food processing, mechanisation and automation, economic and marketing. Only senior research officers were allowed to deliver lectures, under a new regulation. Senior research assistants with more than 10 years experience were also eligible to conduct the practical activities. Modular courses at the elementary and advanced level were designed with follow-up courses for entrepreneurs.

Some of the old procedures were changed to adhere to the MS ISO 9001:2001 guidelines. A course, for example, could only be carried out if it met the minimum number of 15 participants. MTTC changed its marketing strategy by targeting predominantly government agencies. Government agencies would sponsor their target group farmers or entrepreneurs to be trained by MTTC. The new manager had spent some funds to erect a sign board that advertised the training centre by the road side in front of the centre. Advertisement space was also bought in local newspapers with regard to promoting the training programs.



**Figure 2:** Client satisfaction survey results from 2000 to 2010  
 Source: Client satisfaction survey conducted by MTTC 2000 to 2010

A client satisfaction survey conducted by MTTC revealed that transportation and class room facilities were satisfactory throughout the years from 1998 to 2004 (Figure 2). Food, accommodation, and course materials delivered had gradually increased over the years, especially from 2002.

MTTC segmented its participants into two categories: the walk in participants and sponsored participants. The first category consisted of those who wanted to know the new technologies generated by MARDI and were eager to add new knowledge or skills. Some of them were entrepreneurs who wanted to enhance their skills or to get a certificate as a testimony before applying for a loan from the bank. Some of them attended the training as a prerequisite before they were offered business permits. For example, a food manufacturing company must get the HACCP certificate before the authority could issue a business license. MTTC provided the training to fulfill this requirement and the certificate was endorsed by SIRIM Berhad (SIRIM is a government agency mandated for research and technology development as well as for quality accreditation and certifications).

MTTC had signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with government agencies for the second category. These government agencies were responsible for the sponsorship of a certain number of participants to MTTC for specific training required by that particular agency. Under this agreement, both organisations would meet and discuss the training programs, the modules, the number of courses and participants to be trained, and the cost of organising the training. This saw MTTC having adequate participants from 2005 to meet the criterion of conducting its training programs. Both agencies could then plan a long-term program for their target group and participants.

MTTC was not able to estimate the number of participants for each training program in the first category since there was no specific way out of knowing how many participants would register. The normal practice was for MTTC to provide a time frame of no later than seven working days before the course. Under the MS ISO 9001:2001 procedure, the minimum number of participants for any course was 15. If the number of participants registered was less than 15, the course would be cancelled, and the registered participants would be informed by phone and fax or letter. The number of participants on the average in any course had ranged from 15 to 25.

## **WHAT NEXT?**

After reviewing the internal as well as the annual reports of MTTC, the management of MARDI was undecided whether it would be worthwhile to reinvest in the MTTC project. Do you think the performance of MTTC is satisfactory?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss MTC's strengths and weaknesses.
2. Do you think the remedial actions taken by MTTC are sufficient? If not, how can they improve on it?
3. Is the performance of MTTC satisfactory?
4. Is it worthwhile for MARDI to reinvest and to continue with MTTC?

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### Appendix A: Courses conducted by MTTC

No.	Course title	Duration	Course fee/participant
1.	HACCP- verification and auditing	5 days	RM 1800
2.	Food processing course	3 days	RM 500
3.	Agricultural management course	5 days	RM 800
4.	Landscape	5 days	RM 1750
5.	Entrepreneurship	5 days	RM 1500
6.	Project management	5 days	RM 1000

Source: MTTC course brochure



# Case Study **2** At the Crossroads of Career and Camaraderie

**Mawaddah Alias<sup>1</sup>**

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**Arif Hassan<sup>2</sup>**

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**Abstract:** This case study presents a sunny scenario of a hard-working, talented and competitive employee who is seen to be recognised and rewarded for her efforts by her superiors. This case analysis elucidates the fact that for achieving success, recognition and excellence in an organisation, two factors are of substantial importance. One would be personal attributes of an employee such as hard-work, competitiveness, talent and skills and second the presence of an inspirational, motivating, helpful, friendly, trusting, supportive, and an unbiased leader. The case study clearly depicts that when these two factors combine, they bring about highly positive developments for the employee as well as for the entire organisation. However, difficult choices are to be made by a manager and the employee herself when opportunities for recognition and promotion knock on the door.

---

## **Prologue**

“So, when can we expect a call from you to confirm your new job here at TM Global?” asked Mr. Yusa to Zulaikha, with high hopes that she would accept the offer soon to begin a new project for the global communications business. Fidgeting with the telephone cord, Zulaikha hesitated and laughed shyly, with no firm answer to give to the General Manager of TM Global on the other side of the line.

“I have not made a decision yet. May I notify you by the end of this month?” Zulaikha cleared her throat and waited for a response.

“Yes, of course. Well, I hope to hear good news from you. Assalamualaikum”, ended Mr. Yusa before hanging up the phone.

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“Wa’alaikummusalam”, replied Zulaikha. She stared at the phone for a few moments, after hanging up, with several thoughts going through her mind and then looked at her computer screen to continue her work that was pending for the day.

### **All in a Day’s work**

To Zulaikha, every day is a great morning to go to work. Whether it is the clear blue sheet of sky draped beautifully above the busy pedestrians, crossing the roads of the congested traffic in the city, or the gloomy dark clouds covering the city skyscrapers, the nice ten-minute walk to the office from the train station is what Zulaikha enjoys almost every day. She considers it as her morning exercise before beginning her tasks in the office.

She also enjoyed watching birds chirping and flying from one lamp post to another, the wonderful smell of brewing coffee from the nearby cafes and anything that caught her eye while she strolled along the sidewalk to her office building.

“Good morning, Pak Man!” Zulaikha greeted the security guard with a smile on reaching the entrance to her office building.

“Good morning, Miss Zulaikha”, replied Pak Man while he tilted his security cap and smiled at the cheerful woman who never missed to welcome him in the morning.

“Hope you have a pleasant day today”, said Zulaikha as she proceeded to the elevators. Pak Man nodded in response and looked on as Zulaikha entered the elevator before turning back to his previous position by the door.

Entering the empty office in the morning, Zulaikha sat at her desk and looked around her cubicle. She still couldn’t believe that she had been offered a position at Telekom Malaysia Berhad (TM) after her graduation, which she accepted without a doubt. Upon acceptance, she was placed under the supervision of Mr. Amir in the Mobile Maritime & Infra Management Department of TM Retail that dealt with providing mobile satellite communications services to consumers. The major industry requiring this service is the Maritime industry which includes the Malaysian Navy, local fishermen and Marine Department for communication purposes while at sea but not all use the services through TM. Within her first year in the department, she soon realised that not many local consumers were aware of TM providing mobile satellite services as TM was generally known for its fixed line, Internet and as a broadband service provider. Additionally, Zulaikha observed that though this department had been established for well over two decades, a deficit budget and limited manpower, had constrained marketing activities over the years. Lack of support and marketing promotion of this service in TM had led to a decrease in potential sales of the TM mobile satellite services. However, lately, this service had contributed high revenues to TM. Zulaikha liked her job because she was given the opportunity to explore the mobile satellite business field, guided by Mr. Amir. He had given her the opportunity to assist in selling the service though she had been in the department for almost two years only and was still considered a newcomer.



“Ah yes, Zulaikha,” Zulaikha was startled by Mr. Amir’s voice suddenly interrupting her concentration. “I just got a call from Mr. Yusa, General Manager of TM Global asking us to do a presentation about the mobile satellite services as they want us to assist in expanding the market. We need to present it next week.” Zulaikha nodded and jotted the date down on her notepad.

“Could you please prepare the presentation, complete with recommendations or solutions. We need to give some ideas on business improvement and outline some strategies for them to consider for implementation as they are new in this area,” informed Mr. Amir. He continued, “I want you to think of something that will enhance this business, but if you are not sure, please let me know and we can discuss it together. If there are any other issues, please come and see me by noon. I have a few meetings in the evening and will not be in after lunch,” said Mr Amir before leaving her office.

Zulaikha lifted her head to look at Mr. Amir after she had finished writing the information and replied, “Okay, Mr. Amir, I will inform you once it is done and if I need assistance, I will notify you. Thank you.” She was honoured that Mr. Amir had confidence in her to the extent of inviting to be involved in any meeting or presentation. Certainly, this would add to her experience and imbue her with confidence when interacting with other staff members or customers.

A week passed. Being an organised person, Zulaikha had prepared herself to start her tasks by listing all the tasks to be completed within the one-week period. The requested presentation was completed and she was now so preoccupied with completing another proposal documentation to submit to Mr. Amir for approval by the end of the day, that she hardly noticed someone approaching her desk.

“Knock knock”, said Ben whilst gently tapping on Zulaikha’s desk and while joking with his colleague, “Why so serious?”

Glancing up, Zulaikha laughed and replied, “My mother didn’t send me to school”, a line from the Batman Begins movie script. They both enjoyed exchanging script lines from any movie, occasionally, and would see whether the other person replied by way of any other lines from that movie, and which had become their game during office hours. Being the only female in the department, Ben treated Zulaikha like his own little sister.

“Good one,” exclaimed Ben, knowing Zulaikha always beat him in their little game. “So, I heard you got to prepare a presentation for TM Global. How’s the preparation getting along?” asked Ben.

“Yup, the meeting is in less than two hours and the presentation slide is done. I’m just waiting for Mr. Amir to go through it again, in case he wants to add some more information”, answered Zulaikha. Proud of his colleague and knowing she would do well, Ben wished her luck before retiring back into his cubicle.

“Alright, the slides are fine. Good job, Zulaikha. Let’s go meet with the TM Global team”, said Mr. Amir after going through the completed slides with Zulaikha for the fifth time. He was surprised at Zulaikha’s competency for she had submitted

the slides within three days after he had asked for her help a week ago. To his surprise, she actually came up with some good and unexpected recommendations along with the ideas proposed. He realised how eager she was to learn more without feeling shy as a new employee. Silently, he was proud to have her in his team and hoped to see her hidden talents shine.

Right from the start, Mr. Amir could see the potential in Zulaikha. He hoped with his knowledge and supervision, he would be able to help Zulaikha build her career in the company; He was confident that they as a team could contribute to TM to generate more sales that could lead to more revenue in the future. Always dealing with male staff in the past years, Mr. Amir seldom had female staff to supervise. At the start, he was worried that Zulaikha might not be able to accept his straight-forward, strict way of giving instructions. Instead, she was completely the opposite. He was happy that she could quickly adapt to his working style. From time to time, he would switch from being a strict boss and behave in a light-hearted manner towards her so she would feel motivated. As a married man, he knew how to deal with women. Also, he was glad that Ben and Zulaikha got along nicely, though sometimes there appeared to be some competition between themselves as to who could outperform the other.

After gathering the necessary items, Mr. Amir and Zulaikha headed out of the office to meet with the TM Global team at their office located 33 levels above TM Retail.

### **The Uncut Diamond is Unveiled**

“Welcome, Mr. Amir and Miss Zulaikha”, greeted Mr. Yusa as his guests entered the meeting room. “Please, take a seat”, he said showing two empty seats for them. When everyone in the room was seated, Mr. Yusa introduced his four team members to Mr. Amir and Zulaikha, who nodded their heads in acknowledgement. Humbly, Mr. Yusa continued to speak purposefully, “We are pleased to have TM Retail here. We are also eager to hear what this mobile satellite is all about. I hear this service played a major role in generating increased revenue for TM last year and I hope we can work out something to enhance use of this service from TM even more. The maritime community is expanding and we should grab this opportunity to provide our mobile satellite services to them. Okay, without further ado, I would like to welcome Mr. Amir to present his presentation”.

“Firstly, I would like to thank all of you at TM Global for having us here to make this presentation on mobile satellite services. This presentation was prepared by my staff member, Zulaikha. Therefore, I would like to call upon her to present it,” said Mr. Amir to the members of the floor.

Butterflies fluttered in Zulaikha’s stomach. Zulaikha was surprised to be called upon to make this presentation as it was unexpected. She knew that this presentation was a big marketing opportunity for their department. Hence, it should be explained by a higher management team member. However, since her boss insisted, Zulaikha

put on a game face. “Zulaikha, please proceed,” smiled Mr. Amir and mouthed her to do her best.

Zulaikha nervously started the presentation initially. Nevertheless, she quickly got the hang of it and completed the presentation leaving the audience in awe. Then began the barrage of questions from TM Global, all of which Zulaikha succeeded in answering. Mr. Yusa saw the talent in Zulaikha and apart from his interest in the expansion of the mobile satellite services, the idea to make Zulaikha part of his team immediately came to mind.

“Thank you, Zulaikha, for the wonderful presentation. We would like to continue discussing this matter and will notify you on the proposed date”, exclaimed En. Yusuf to the floor members. He thanked everyone and ended the meeting and bid them farewell. As everyone was heading towards the door, Mr. Yusa approached Mr. Amir and praised him, “You have quite a staff there, Mr. Amir. See you at the next meeting.”

“Same here, see you soon,” replied Mr. Amir and together they exited the meeting room.

After several follow-up meetings, Zulaikha’s constant performance and capability to express good ideas and perspectives had convinced Mr. Yusa more of Zulaikha’s intellectual capability in the mobile satellite services business arrangement in TM. He also saw the commitment in Zulaikha towards her job.

One midday, during office hours, Zulaikha’s office telephone rang and she stopped her work momentarily to pick up the phone. “Hello, Zulaikha speaking. How may I help you?” said Zulaikha to the person on the other line.

“Hello Zulaikha. This is Mr. Yusa from TM Global. I have an important issue to discuss with you. Can we discuss it over lunch today?” asked Mr. Yusa.

Fully aware of his busy schedule, Zulaikha accepted his invitation. “Yes, Mr. Yusa. Where shall we meet?”

“Meet me at the Home Secrets at 1 o’clock.”

Zulaikha entered the suggested cafe ten minutes early and selected a suitable table for the business discussion. While waiting for Mr. Yusa’s arrival, she opened an online newsletter about mobile satellite on her Smartphone to read. After reading some articles in the newsletter, she glimpsed towards the door and saw Mr. Yusa approaching the table.

“Hello, Mr. Yusa”, said Zulaikha standing up from her seat to welcome the General Manager and waited for him to be seated first. Soon, a waiter came over to their table and as soon as he taken their orders, Mr. Yusa immediately informed her of the purpose of meet-up.

“I am impressed with you and therefore, I would you to be a part of my team in TM Global to expand the mobile satellite services in our company”, explained Mr. Yusa. He noticed that Zulaikha did not expect any of this, for she looked speechless. Taking the silence as a sign there would be no response any time soon, he continued, “I was also informed that you have worked in TM for two years. Don’t you think it’s time for you to do job rotation?”

“Thank you for the offer,” Zulaikha took a deep breath and found her voice to reply to Mr. Yusa, “As much as I like TM Global to be my next stop for the job rotation, I think I need to think this through and discuss this development with Mr. Amir.” She could not help grinning from ear to ear and felt happy and excited that she was being offered a new job position.

Though Mr. Amir could recruit someone else to be part of his team, he would rather consider taking someone with experience from among the TM staff. This would save cost, time and energy compared to hiring someone new. Also, before being posted inside TM, the candidate must go through a general one-month training stint on TM as well as several other training sessions. After the training, Mr. Amir would personally need to train the newcomer about the business and that obviously was a time-consuming affair. Keeping in mind a fast track, Mr. Amir wanted to expand mobile satellite services to secure its position in TM as it had been a component of TM’s services for quite some time. His plan to establish TM as a major provider of satellite services would require a person with the right calibre to work with him.

Zulaikha was aware that it is a norm in TM to do three job rotations every two years to climb up the management upper level. Usually, the employee had to apply for it through Human Resources (HR). It was very rare for an employee to be offered a new position from another TM staff directly. Furthermore, TM Global was one of the most difficult departments to join as they were very selective on selecting their apprentices.

“That is alright. I did speak to Mr. Amir about this matter and the call is yours to make. Please consider it. Think about the company,” said Mr. Yusa as their food arrived. “Let’s eat and get energised to work!” joked Mr. Yusa to the beaming young female employee. He was delighted to watch Zulaikha’s response. He really hoped she would take the offer.

### **Business, not Personal**

After her short lunch with Mr. Yusa, Zulaikha sat inside her cubicle and recalled the event that had taken place a few moments ago. She was in a haze and was surprised to be approached by the General Manager of TM Global to not only have lunch with him but to be offered a position inside TM Global. As much as she was happy with the offer, she needed to discuss it with her boss to seek his approval to move. Furthermore, she wanted to know what he thought of the new position.

She continued with her pending tasks while waiting for Mr. Amir to return to the office from a meeting to discuss the new development. She earnestly wanted to talk about it to Ben but after fighting with her inner thoughts, she decided to let her boss know first.

Soon after, she heard footsteps walking towards their office and she looked up to see the person she was expecting entering his office. She got up to go meet Mr. Amir. She gave a tentative knock, waited for his response and entered. Zulaikha sat herself down in the leather chair facing Mr. Amir. “Mr. Amir, I have something to say though

I am told you have been notified about it.” Zulaikha cleared her throat and continued, “Mr. Yusa asked me to join TM Global earlier today during lunch.”

“I see. I guess he didn’t waste any time to inform you right after he told me this morning”, said Mr. Amir, visibly upset by the interaction between his staff and Mr. Yusa. “Well, what do you think? Are you interested in taking up the offer?” asked Mr. Amir while sorting out his files on the desk. “Did he mention when will you start there?”

Surprised to hear the disappointment in the tone of his voice, Zulaikha gathered herself to reply her boss, “It is a fantastic offer and I feel happy about it. I have thought about it, and I have decided that I would like to join TM Global. I guess, once I have completed my two years here, I will be able to join them. I will have to inform HR.”

“In less than three months, you would have completed your two years here,” said Mr. Amir as he glanced at the standing calendar on his desk. “Do you have time to complete all the given tasks before moving there? I don’t want you to submit incomplete reports to me”, ordered Mr. Amir. “Also, it does not necessarily mean that once you have completed the two-year duration, on the dot you can automatically move to another job position. There are several things to be considered. Can we talk about this later, Zulaikha.”

“Yes, I understand, Mr. Amir,” Zulaikha nodded. She did not know what to think or what to do when she did not get the support she was expecting from Mr. Amir. She stood up and returned to her cubicle.

She sat in her cubicle ruminating. *“If ever I want to do the job rotation, I need to complete all my tasks here. But how can I leave if Mr. Amir doesn’t approve the transfer? The HR will ask for his consent,* thought Zulaikha sadly. She sighed deeply. One does not get such offers often!

The clock showed office hours to be over. Zulaikha quickly packed her belongings to ready herself to go home. She spotted Ben walking out of the door and decided to walk out with him. “Ben! Wait!” said Zulaikha as she began walking towards him. “How was your day? I barely saw you today”, asked Zulaikha as she stood beside him while waiting for the elevator.

“Hey, you. I’m good today. You know, the usual, meeting with customers asking them to pay their bills”, chuckled Ben. “How about you? How’s the planning for the mobile satellite services?”

Zulaikha felt relieved that they were the only ones in the elevator so she could talk to Ben privately. “I’m fine. The business plan with mobile satellite services is fine with the TM Global. I really hope the execution is fine, as well.”

The elevators opened and each of them said their good-byes and went their separate ways.

After both his staff members had left the office, Mr. Amir sat at his desk thinking of all the possible scenarios if he let Zulaikha leave his department. He was happy with her achievements and would support her, but he felt sad knowing that he would no

longer have her as his staff. He enjoyed having her and thought the three of them made a great team. He had many projects planned for Zulaikha and Ben for the following years.

He was also uncomfortable that Mr. Yusa had made an unexpectedly drastic move by offering his staff a position based on the excuse of job rotation. Mr. Amir knew that Mr. Yusa meant well. All that he wanted was to ensure the expansion of the mobile satellite services of TM and enlarge the customer base so that TM would enjoy increased business and profits. He also knew that with Zulaikha joining TM Global, Mr. Yusa would be assured of an excellent worker as she had the will and spirit to contribute to the company. However, if Zulaikha was to leave, Mr. Amir would then have to start teaching the newcomer the same things he had taught Zulaikha about the mobile satellite services which had taken some time. Only time will tell, thought Mr. Amir to himself. He closed his office door and headed to the elevator.

The next day, Zulaikha was still thinking about the offer. Initially, she had been happy but after thinking about it again, she realised that she enjoyed her current office environment, which had become her comfort zone. She was already well-adjusted with her tasks and responsibilities. If she were to change to a new position, she would have to start adapting to the new environment all over again. However, professionally, Zulaikha knew by taking the offer, she could help contribute more to the company by helping to enhance the mobile satellite services. She knew that TM Global had all the funds and with sufficient manpower, TM Global could accomplish beyond its expectations.

Shaking her head, Zulaikha continued with her tasks so as not to be distracted by the offer and its consequences. *Decisions, decisions*, thought Zulaikha.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What would you do if you were in Zulaikha's place? Give reasons.
2. Why or why should not Mr. Amir support Zulaikha's application?
3. Based upon the case, how would you describe Zulaikha's personality traits?
4. How would you describe the leadership style of Mr. Amir?



# Case Study 3 Succeed or Succumb?

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**Abstract:** The case study primarily deals with the analysis of two different, rather opposing styles of leadership and their resultant effects on the personality, attitude and performance of the subordinate employees. This case details the characteristics of a bossy, authoritative, prejudiced, close-minded, and destructive critical leader whose approach to dealing with subordinate staff lowers an employee's morale, leads to lower productivity and even forces one to quit the job; whereas on the other hand, it shows a participative, open-minded, supportive, amicable, and friendly leader who is able to boost employee morale and enhance motivation to work harder, while being committed to the organisation. This case study also provides an illustration of the fact that sometimes, in order to succeed and get promoted in an organisation, we may have to put aside our personal relationships in the workplace, or even walk over them to climb the ladder of success.

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## PROLOGUE

It was already 11pm and Fatihah still could not sleep thinking about what her boss had conveyed to her that morning which was still lingering on in her mind. Janet said "Fatihah, I know all this while I've been yelling and condemning your work but I want you to know that I'm observing my staff too. I need to identify and groom a potential successor. You are someone who is walking the talk, and who will accept whatever tasks assigned by me without saying no. You just grin and bear it. Yes, no doubt I still have to amend your work but they were not substantial amendments. Normally, when you pass your work to me for comments, it is like 85% ready to be released. So, I'm requesting you to see me because I want you to know that I'm

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going to promote you as a manager. You will need to do some write up about yourself and your achievements so that I can write a memo to the Management on this. Once everything is complete and approved, you have the option of whether you want to accept it or not. However, once you accept the offer, please bear in mind that my expectation from you will be higher and that you will have to make a commitment that won't make the promotion as your stepping stone to jump to another company. I also need to warn you that there will be repercussions on your promotion as some of your colleagues have been working in this company for quite some time but they have not got their promotions yet." Fatihah was puzzled, anxious, stunned and didn't quite understand her own feelings about this great news and how to react to her boss. One thing she noted was that she was supposed to feel happy, but it didn't turn out the way it should be.

Fatihah, a Malay lady, aged 30, had joined ABC Co, henceforth "Company" on 1 October 2009 as the Senior Executive and was stationed at the Legal Department of the Company. She has a Degree in Law (Hons.) from Universiti Teknologi Mara and was registered as advocate and solicitor by the High Court of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, in 2007. She had been working with AmanahRaya Berhad as Senior Executive and was tasked to manage estate and trust administration for the deceased, prior to joining the Company. She had loved working in AmanahRaya Berhad, but she couldn't afford to lose the offer made by the Company as it was a far cry from the salary that she had been drawing at AmanahRaya. So Fatihah, drawn by the attractive salary, made a decision to join the Company. In the Company, she was assigned an overall and dedicated role in rendering legal advice, reviewing and drafting various legal documents and providing legal counsel to ensure compliance and governance of relevant laws and regulations, in order to safeguard Company interests and mitigate legal risks and exposures (focused, but not limited, on ensuring legal and regulatory compliance of MSC Malaysia status, litigation and legal matters of the Company's subsidiaries). Fatihah was a very consistent and persistent person. She was an avid, eager and hard-working learner. She was good at time management, and her work took precedence over everything. But behind these characteristics, she was actually a very sensitive and introvert kind of person. She had a colleague by the name of Sofia, who worked with her in the same unit. Both of them reported to Sarah who was their performance manager.

Sarah, a Malay lady, aged 37, had joined the Company in 2001 and held the position of Senior Manager. She had tendered her resignation in 2011. She was a graduate from the University of Oxford and was responsible as well as accountable for the conduct and actions of Fatihah and Sofia in delivering their work. She was a very diplomatic, energetic, open to discussion and "*attention to details*" type of boss. Fatihah used to enjoy being her staff as Sarah practised open communication and discussion. She always encouraged her staff to not allow anybody lower their self-esteem and self-confidence. Because of her charisma, the Management of the Company came to rely on her and sought her assistance on any legal issue, rather than consulting



the Head of the Legal Department. She tendered her resignation after she realised that working in the Company was not helping her career advancement.

Sofia, a Malay lady, aged 33, had joined the Company in 2007 as an Executive and was later promoted as Senior Executive in 2008. The legal matters under her charge were different from those of Fatihah. She had been a very good friend, colleague and sister to Fatihah. Both of them shared a very close interpersonal relationship. Nevertheless, Fatihah noted that Sarah often gave Sofia's work to Fatihah, giving the reason that Sofia was tied up with other work. But that was not the case, as Fatihah discovered later. Sofia often was busy with work not related to the office; she appeared to be utilising her office time to do 'other' work.

Janet, a Chinese lady, age 45, was the head of the Legal Department who had joined the Company in the year 2000. Janet was well known as the 'Iron Lady'; close-minded, stereotyping kind of boss with prejudiced views and opinions. She liked to admonish people regardless of who they were. Perhaps being one of the pioneer members of the Company had made her arrogant and haughty of her position and power. Sarah was her blue-eyed lady as she knew that she would do everything for her, and she just wanted Sarah to report to her. Janet would personally handle a matter only if it involved some major issue. Sarah's resignation had given Janet a difficult time as she now needed to take over everything that had been previously handled by Sarah. Janet had been depressed for a few months as a result of Sarah's resignation.

## **THE COMPANY**

The Company had been established by the Malaysian government for the purpose of spearheading the development and implementation of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) and was mandated to coordinate, promote and develop the information and communications technology (ICT) industry and selected services. It was the Company's vision to be world-leading ICT hub by being a well mandated, value-based, highly effective organisation. Its aim was to attract and nurture leading-edge and world-class companies that would facilitate knowledge transfer and wealth creation. It was the Company's mission to establish Malaysia as a global hub and preferred location for ICT and multimedia innovations, services and operations. In achieving the Company's vision and mission, the Legal Department in which Fatihah was working and which consisted of 12 team members, including the Head of Department, was responsible for ensuring that the Company's interests were always safeguarded. The legal department was also responsible for mitigating the Company's potential risks and exposure by providing quality legal advice or legal documents to the relevant department or party.

## **THE EVENT**

During her earlier tenure with the Company, Fatihah had never felt satisfied and happy about her work, and she never knew that the decision she made to leave AmanahRaya

Berhad was one of the decisions that she would remember as not sound because she was just driven by monetary incentives.. Driven by the excitement of getting a better salary, she never bothered to seek an opinion from others or to find someone who could have given her relevant information about the Company. On her first day in the Company, she was greeted by Sarah as her performance manager, who explained Fatihah's job scope and what was expected of her. Fatihah had quietly told herself, "Erm... I think I can learn a lot from her... She seems to be a very good teacher".

It had been three months since Fatihah had started working in the Company and everything had been going well until one day Sarah asked her "Hey Fatihah, do you want to go to New York? Well, Janet asked me to go with her to meet our US lawyer but I don't think I should go because CEO and COO might want to seek legal advice at any time. If Janet and I go, it will not look good on our department". Fatihah replied "What would be my job scope if I were to go?" Sarah responded "You just have to do whatever Janet asks you to do. I think you will be responsible for preparing a report on the trip." Fatihah agreed and went to New York with Janet in early 2010. It was not a pleasant experience for her as immediately on her return Janet scolded her in front of the CFO of the Company for the report that she had prepared. Janet was tired as she had not been able to sleep due to jet lag and was therefore unable to go through the report before it was submitted to the CFO. It all seemed very unfair to Fatihah. But she just grinned and bore it!

Months passed by and she realised that Janet didn't like her. Fatihah noted that Sofia received a different treatment from Janet, as she had never been scolded by Janet. This observation puzzled Fatihah, as Sarah had once told her that Janet was dissatisfied with Sofia's work, particularly in terms of delivering the work on time. But then why did Sofia receive better treatment from Janet if she had an issue with her? Janet would always pin point Fatihah's faults, be it in department meetings or during discussions. Janet would always scold Fatihah even for the smallest of her mistakes. Sarah noticed changes in Fatihah, as Fatihah seemed to look afraid and uncomfortable whenever Janet requested to see her. During performance appraisal at the end of the year 2010, Sarah asked Fatihah of her experience working in the Company thus far, and that was where Fatihah voiced her frustration towards Janet. No matter how good or how hard she tried to please Janet, Janet would never trust her, only because she was unable to speak English fluently, although she was very good in her writing skills. She mused perhaps that was not sufficient for Janet. Sarah understood and explained that it was not surprising for Sarah to hear all those complaints about Janet as she was well known for her characteristic attitude. Even the Management would refuse to deal with Janet when there were any legal issues involved. Sarah told Fatihah that Janet would not change but Fatihah needed to demonstrate that she was a competent employee though she may not be very proficient in the English language.

Surviving in the Legal Department with help from Sarah and Sofia, Fatihah managed to stay focused and would deliver her work on time and of the required quality. However, most of her colleagues who had joined with her had left the Company's

Legal Department, leaving only her and Sofia as seniors. In November 2011, Sarah tendered her resignation on the basis of the reason that she wanted to advance in her career and as she could not see any chances of doing so in the Company. This news saddened Fatihah and Sofia. As a result of Sarah's resignation, Fatihah had to report directly to Janet. This was when the nightmares started. Everyday Fatihah would go to work with a heavy heart and wonder what fault of hers that Janet would pinpoint on that day. Janet's attitude had lowered Fatihah's self-esteem and self-confidence immensely. She was no longer someone who dared to voice her ideas and arguments and started becoming very rigid as Janet had always been a 'by the book' boss. With this attitude, Janet had restricted her staff from being creative and innovative. These feelings of Fatihah continued to haunt her until the day Janet called her to her room and informed Fatihah of her intention to promote her as a manager. Janet reminded Fatihah not to tell anybody about her intention as she didn't want any negative repercussions for as long promotion procedures were not completed. Fatihah was puzzled as she didn't know how sincere Janet was at that point in time. Further, she felt that Sofia would be sad as she had been working there for the past 5 years, but still it was Fatihah who had been chosen by Janet for the promotion.

Things weren't happening as planned, because one day accidentally Sofia got to know about Janet's decision of promoting Fatihah as a manager. This news was leaked to her by the department's secretary. The department's secretary knew about the promotion from Janet's calendar. The secretary had a blocked few hours of Janet's time to interview Fatihah on her readiness for the manager's position. As expected, Sofia was depressed and saddened by the news. She felt betrayed as she claimed that the right approach was for Janet to tell the whole department that she was promoting Fatihah to a higher position. It was her right to promote her staff and there was no need to do it discreetly. Her act of concealing Fatihah's promotion from other staff members was construed as Janet not wanting to hurt Sofia. As a result, Sofia could not even bring herself to talk to Fatihah in her usual manner for a week. Fatihah confronted Sofia on this matter and Sofia admitted that it was not Fatihah's fault, but Janet's doing. Sofia said that she needed time to accept it. Fatihah was caught in the middle as she did not intend to conceal the news from Sofia but Janet had asked her to do so. The feelings of guilt, sadness, uneasiness etc. lingered and Fatihah realised that something had to be done regarding the promotion, and at the same time, she had to take care not to further sour her friendship with Sofia.

From that day, Fatihah tried to act as normal as possible so that the relationship between her and Sofia would not be awkward. Suddenly, Johan, aged 37, who had taken over Sarah's position, tendered his resignation as he could not take the bullying by Janet. Fatihah got to know that Janet had asked Sofia to apply for Johan's position. Sofia did whatever Janet asked her to do, but did not tell Fatihah at all about the matter. Now it was Fatihah's turn to be hurt as she felt that it was pay back time for Sofia. Fatihah did not want to prolong the issue, so again she just grinned and bore it! It had been Fatihah's intention to leave the Company since the day she joined, for her

personal peace of mind and for her own career enhancement. This was because she realised that the longer she stayed in the Company, the lower her self-esteem and self-confidence would become. She didn't want to be that kind of a person. When she had made up her mind to leave she began actively job hunting

## EPILOGUE

In December 2011, Fatihah accepted the promotion as a Manager because she knew she deserved it. She knew how much of effort she had put in over the last 2 years, and she could not afford to allow her friendship with Sofia to be the barrier for a well deserved promotion. Sofia also got her promotion as a Manager in January 2012. This put a stop to the sour relationship between Sofia and Fatihah. As for Janet, she acted as if nothing had happened, as at the end of the day, both her subordinates were promoted as managers and there was no issue to squabble out. Sarah, on the other hand, was currently working as a partner in one of the established legal firms in the town. She was looking forward to working with Fatihah again and had told her that she would discreetly help her find a new job. As managers, Fatihah and Sofia knew that they had to carry bigger responsibilities now, and be accountable for whatever they did, including the conduct of their staff. Looking back, Fatihah realised that Janet had not changed at all. So all she could do was to adapt and compromise with Janet's attitude. Her promotion had not stopped her from continuing the search for a better opportunity to work with some other company, although she knew that if one day she tendered her resignation, Janet would definitely raise the promotion issue, a strategy that had used with Fatihah's ex-colleagues. Fatihah told herself "If the Company wants to lose talented people just because they are not willing to do anything against Janet, so be it. But I will not allow myself to be at a loss, because the longer I stay here, the more I lose my own self!" Hence, the search for the new job continued.

It had come to Fatihah's knowledge that whenever there was an exit interview, most of her ex-colleagues never failed to highlight to the HR department about the leadership style of Janet, but to everybody's surprise, nothing had been done to resolve that issue. The Legal Department of the Company continued to have a very high turnover rate. But everybody knew was that it was very hard for Janet to get promoted as some of the Senior Management officials had objected twice to Janet's promotion, when presented for approval. Unfortunately, that did not resolve the issue as Janet felt even more furious when she got to know that her promotion was rejected, thus resulting in her channelling her anger to her subordinates. As a result of the dissatisfaction amongst the team member towards Janet's leadership, the score of the Employee Engagement survey for the Legal department was found to be the lowest within the Corporate Services Division. Again, Fatihah knew that it was now up to her on what she wanted to do next.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What management issues can be identified in this case?
2. If you were the CEO of this company, what would you do to correct the problem?



# Case Study 4 Dialing the Right Number

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**Abstract:** This case explores the role played by a company called *Just Dial* which rose from being a number one telephone based directory to be the leading free local search website. It did so by incorporating the best practices in website designing and search engine optimisation techniques. Although the company has been able to maintain its legacy of being the leader, the road ahead is full of challenges. There is stiff competition from other local search engines and the dot com companies which are aggressively coming up with their unique business propositions. Also, any technological or non technological move by Google would constitute a key threat to the organisation. This case study deals with a host of management issues such as innovation in technology, constituent elements for an effective database, web site performance and customer-centric approach to deal with strong competitors.

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## INTRODUCTION

It was 13 April 2012 and Mr.V.Krishnan, Director of Just Dial Pvt. Ltd. was narrating his ‘company’s journey from the inception of an idea to the number one local search engine of India’ to the case authors at *Just Dial* office, Noida, India. He expressed the notion that “Ideas don’t make a company, concepts don’t make a company; it is the people who make a company.”

The objective of the company is to improve its service each day. The essence of any company’s growth is in its simplicity, honesty and integrity. This synchronises with *Just Dial*’s philosophy. The vision of *Just Dial* is to make sure that every Indian uses its services and every business, from a local key maker located in a remote area to a big business tycoon in a metro, is registered with them.

In 2011, *Just Dial* received about 180.7 million search requirements from finance users, 77.2 million Internet searches (visits) and 9.6 million cellular Internet searches

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in finance. *Just Dial* is positioned as the 40th most visited portal (in terms of unique visitors) in India by comScore Inc.

How does *Just Dial* work? *Just Dial* acts as an interface or medium between the users and business organisations by allowing users to find relevant sources of products and services promptly and on the other hand assisting the businesses listed in *Just Dial* database to market their products and services. The website *www.justdial.com* was launched in 2007. *Just Dial* search service is available to users across multiple platforms such as the Internet, mobile Internet, over the telephone (voice) and text (SMS).

*Just Dial* is a case of getting it right the second time around. The portal is number one in the local search engine category. It has a loyal and satisfied following from business houses and users. *Just Dial* is known to provide fast, free, reliable and comprehensive information to their users and connect buyers to sellers. While *Just Dial* has constantly innovated itself and stayed ahead of its competitors, who are generally loss making, any forceful move by giant players like Google India, remains a major challenge. As the organisation expands, maintaining management bandwidth to manage the growth will be a challenge, particularly to its global expansion plans through a different promoter unit. In addition, *Just Dial* has to keep itself abreast of innovative technologies and novel applications to continue to remain ahead of the pack.

## **ORGANISATIONAL BACKGROUND**

Mani (founder of *Just Dial*) began his chartered accountancy (CA) articleship subsequent to graduation. But soon after, he had to cease studying for his CA exams as he had to work to take care of the family income, resulting in a sales job with a yellow pages company called United Database India (UDI) in 1987.

He worked with this company for almost two years. While with this company, the idea of launching a telephonic service struck Mani in 1988 when he was chatting with a client about the prospects of trading information. His logic was simple: "Unlike in the West, Indians are always banking on friends, relatives and neighbours for information in their everyday life. Why not launch a service to cater to this need," he thought. Could this service be offered through the phone? In 1989, he was joined by some like-minded people and with their support started a company called *Ask Me*.

### **Keep Trying**

Of the almost defunct Delhi-based *Ask Me* service, Mani had this to say, "We were much ahead of the times. Those were the days when people had to wait years to get phone connections. The idea was good and well-appreciated, but we didn't see any financial gains from it." One invaluable lesson he had learnt during his experience at *Ask Me* was that the phone number for this service would simply have to be an easy one to remember. Finally *Just Dial* was started, with the number 888 8888, some borrowed furniture, rented PCs, and a small 3 x 5 feet garage on hire.

Today the number has changed from the earlier seven digits, to an eight-digit number i.e 088 88888888. As a network operator-aided number, it is the same number throughout the country, and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with multiple language support, irrespective of which city in the country one is calling from. The company caters to over 25 million unique users and over 200 million searches in a year. Their search engine covers more than 250 cities in India.

The company creates the link between buyers and sellers by helping buyers find the right providers of products and services, while helping sellers improve the efficiency of their marketing channels.

*Just Dial* has raised three rounds of strategic investments from California-based venture fund Sequoia Capital, New York-based Hedge Fund Tiger Global, and Hong Kong-based SAIF partners. The company is in an advanced stage of launching its local search service in North America on a toll free number “1-800-justdial”. Going forward, the company intends to leverage the *Just Dial* brand and know-how for an international franchise.

## **ONLINE BUSINESS INDUSTRY IN INDIA: MOVING FROM FAD TO NEW TREND**

Most Indian industries are expanding their business online. The 2000 burst of the e-bubble certainly tarnished the once glamorous dot-com economy. Today’s journalists and many investors cringe at the thought of more e-inspired goods and services.

Online business impacts the entire business and the corresponding supply chains in which it operates. Online business facilitates an efficient and integrated level of collaboration between the various elements of the supply chain than ever before. Adopting e-Business also allows companies to reduce cost on a larger scale, improve customer service, share information, increase convenience and improve customer response time. Cost savings, opportunism and threat drives action and innovation even in the most conservative organisations. Organisations that leverage on the power of the web and transform their business practices will gain immensely in the long run from numerous benefits brought about by technology.

In the new era, the online-based means of doing commerce has definitely altered several businesses and has impacted their clientele and industry. It has significantly changed the outline of commerce and markets and has had an immense impact on customers and is all set to have a very stimulating future. It has enhanced service quality, reduced costs, unlocked new channels and allowed businesses to deal with the competitive cut-throat environment.

In India, e-business is being determined by the rising on-line travel industry and online travel bookings have amplified considerably after the entrance of low cost carriers. At present, the online travel industry is contributing around 50% to the revenue generated by e-commerce in India. India is now getting acquainted with e-tendering. The Andhra Pradesh government’s efforts constitute an ideal example and a role model for other states.



Similarly, there has been a big boom in the shopping entertainment industry. Yahoo India, MSN India, eBay India, Google India and Monster India have emerged as some of the most popular digital consumer brands in India. Among the popular Indian digital brands – Justdial.com, Naukri.com, Indiatimes.com, Shaadi.com, Rediff.com, Bharat Matrimony.com, and MakeMyTrip.com, among others, have engraved a space for themselves in the psyche of Indian consumers.

In 2004, when Google.com went public, the initial offer of USD 85 per share surged to over USD200 in less than 3 months. Among the drivers behind the growth in Web shoppers is convenience. Most e-shoppers go online to check prices before they buy. Travel reservation or tickets are the most popular purchases. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) report indicates that there are 19.67 million Internet subscribers in March 2011 with an annual growth of 21.59 % as compared to March 2010. Internet subscriber's availed speed is more than 256 KBPS or in other words, broad band users are growing at a rate of 35.5%. The report also indicates that the state with the highest number of Internet subscribers is Maharashtra with the second highest position being taken up by Tamilnadu. The Internet penetration rate given by the TRAI report is based on Internet connections in cybercafés and offices where many users are accessing one connection. The actual numbers of Internet users are significantly higher than the number of users found in the TRAI report.

The critical issue that the e-business industry in India is facing is the difference in active Internet users who look for information in the Internet for various products/ services and the actual number of people who make e-business transactions. The conversion ratio from being an information seeker from the Internet to generating an e-business transaction only stands at 40%.

## **THE MARKET FOR LOCAL SEARCH ENGINES IN INDIA: THE COMPETITORS**

The increased popularity of search engines in the Indian online market has seen the emergence of many local tailor-made search engines. Data shows that 90% of Internet search queries are local in nature e.g. when a user in India searches for 'newspaper' the search engine should display the top Indian newspaper websites rather than providing the major global newspapers. To serve the search queries of the local clientele, there has been an emergence of local search engines.

The localised players who are able to attract significant traffic are Guruji.com, Justdial.com, AskMe, AskLaila Citizensindia.com, Burrp and tolmolbol. Also, there are localised versions of the big giants - Google, Yahoo and MSN.

Each of these Indian search engines have come forward with some or other Unique Selling Proposition (USP). These are testing stages of localised search engines and every start-up is adding new features and making the services better.

Guruji.com was one of the first of the new generation localised search engines. The search engine is focused on providing better search results to Indian consumers. Guruji.com provides local business listings on their website under 'City Search'.

Guruji.com is extracting this business listing information from YellowPages.co.in. As a result, if any business wants to get listed in Guruji, they are required to create an account with YellowPages.co.in. On becoming a member of YellowPages.co.in, they can add, update their listing/information.

AskMe is Infomedia18's foray into the field of providing information to cater to immediate, impulsive and urgent requirements of customers for companies, products, and services. AskMe's service is available on both voice as well as online. The online search service has an extensive directory of information from across India that is both accurate as well as varied.

Sulekha.com is the online and mobile classifieds and yellow pages service, connecting over 6 million members in 25 cities in India, US, Canada and more. Sulekha.com integrates local commerce with the largest social media offering in the Indian space with vibrant local communities of blogs, forums, videos and photos organised into vertical communities of interest such as travel, food, movies, news and cricket. Sulekha.com, with operations in Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chennai, is funded by Indigo Monsoon Group and Norwest Venture Partners (NVP).

Citizensindia.com is a leading structured local search, directory and media company that connects consumers and merchants through trusted content, local expertise and user-friendly tools. By delivering trusted content, citizensindia.com empowers users to make easy decisions about where to spend their time and money. They have a presence in 26 cities of India.

Burrrp is catering to a niche segment. They provide search results pertaining to local food joints, caterers, bakeries and host of other food related businesses etc. Burrrp experienced a bit of media coverage, and seems to be doing well in their niche.

Tolmolbol is more of a localized search portal catering to different segments and offering various services. They have got a bit of coverage in blogosphere.

There is no justification to compare *Just Dial* with other local search engines because their business model is somewhat different from other local search engines. They have their existing users ported from the SMS based search model that was considered to be reliable and users were very much satisfied with it. In addition, their search strategy is not based on an automated manner like web crawlers. Their data is based on human gathered data, resulting in enhanced search results. They have the legacy of their online + brick and mortar model .

## **THE STRATEGY TO LEAD THE BUSINESS: CONSISTENT GROWTH IN DATABASE**

*Just Dial's* database lists 6 million businesses as of quarter one for year 2013 (4.5 million as of end year 2010), which largely consist of micro, small and medium enterprises of (MSMEs). This database continues to grow, increasing its geographical reach and is updated regularly, by a workforce of 250 employees. To expand its network in existing and new cities further, it has appointed resellers to collect data in their respective territories. More than just the scale of its database, *Just Dial's* ability

to consistently keep the database updated has been the reason for strong growth in the usage of its search services.

### **INNOVATION IN SEARCH PLATFORMS**

- Going a step ahead, *Just Dial* has made the database (listings) more relevant and convenient to use:
- They have segmented listings through the use of geographical-codes to augment the significance of search results to user's requirement.
- They have multiple touch points to interact with their users and leverage on their technology-enabled search solutions to present users with multiple options to use either voice (52% of total searches in 2011) or Internet (43%) or mobile internet (5%) or SMS search option.
- *Just Dial* has an indigenously developed algorithm platform which facilitates the provision of search results that are relevant to user's requirement and at the same time offers an effective mix of paid and un-paid listings.
- They have well designed data contingency planning. Each of its eight centres, which support voice-based search, can act as disaster recovery centres for others, if necessary, to make certain constant support for voice-based searches.

### **REVIEWS AND RATING FEATURES**

*Just Dial* also encourages its users to provide reviews and ratings of products or services used by them. It already has 4.5 million reviews and ratings (2.7 million at the end of quarter one for 2012); it is constantly growing, enabling users to make informed decisions. Also, its "Tag Your Friend" feature helps users see the ratings and reviews from their friends, effectively creating a social network for sharing user experiences.

### **REVERSE AUCTION FEATURE**

Users are asked if they would want product/service providers to call them to understand their requirements. If the user opts for the same, he gets an SMS with details of offerings from different providers who would also call up the user for the user's requirements. This enables the user to make an informed decision without directly reaching out to product or service providers. The company has recently introduced an android-based mobile application through which a user can even call the relevant listing while making the search.

### **PERFORMANCE ON THE WEB**

Amongst the Indian websites, [www.justdial.com](http://www.justdial.com) has been ranked 58 with 2.64 million Indian users by [www.alexa.com](http://www.alexa.com), a provider of details of websites across the globe and their usages across various parameters. Among *Just Dial's* peers, only [www.sulekha.com](http://www.sulekha.com) is ranked higher at 47 which, along with local search services,

also provides blog space and specific content related to jobs/careers, movie reviews amongst others. *Just Dial's* ability to grow its online search services is visible from strong growth in online searches (three-year compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 99% to 77.2 million in 2011) and mobile internet searches (three-year CAGR of 215% to 9.6 million in 2011).

## **OPERATIONAL MODEL OF JUSTDIAL**

*Just Dial's* business model connects the seeker to the sought. Calling the customer the king and not compromising on the information demanded by him as the motto, the company's database is divided into sponsored and non-sponsored clients. "We deal in products, services and business. We don't tell you the recipe for cooking Chinese food like other search engines, but we will patch your call with the right provider", says Krishnan.

While the company sustains on sponsored advertisements, it works on key words and geographic locations. In the list of information provided to the customer, the top listed are the company's sponsored clients followed by free listers. That's how *Just Dial* makes money, much like Google which makes money by serving sponsored clients on the top or the right side of the search homepage. Though the priority is given to the sponsored clients, it no way hampers the endeavor of the company in giving away the contact details of free listers.

The process of registering in *Just Dial* is very simple. The prospective customer needs to call in and tell the customer care executive that they would like to be a sponsor. The company will in turn provide the information pertaining to what could be the right bid amount or the right package for him and the right key words for his business or service. In addition, information on business competitors in the area and their bid amount is also provided to the customer.

## **ADVERTISING**

*Just Dial* announced the signing of Amitabh Bachchan as their official brand ambassador for the next three years. Mr. V Krishnan, Director of *Just Dial* expressed that "the company was looking for a brand ambassador who has the characteristics of being No.1 just like *Just Dial*. The service of *Just Dial* appeals to very Indian because of its honesty and integrity. Similarly non other than Mr. Amitabh Bachchan was considered most appropriate for being the Brand Ambassador because of his honest, charismatic, down to earth characteristics, big achiever status and for being respected by all. Mr. VSS Mani, MD & CEO of *Just Dial*, said, "We are extremely happy to sign on Mr. Bachchan as the brand ambassador. He is the perfect fit and symbolises all the core values the brand stands for. Our users find our service highly reliable, efficient and one which always delivers on its promise and when you think of these values, you can just single out one person and that is Amitabh Bachchan." Mr. Amitabh Bachchan himself confesses to having availed of the *Just Dial* services a few times in the past

and expressed his pleasure in being associated with a brand that is offering good service to millions in the country. "It is so difficult to get instant information when you really need it, but *Just Dial* is a one-of-a-kind free service that has been helping people find anything they want. Search is a quintessential part of our lives and I must say it feels good to be associated with a company like Just Dial that's not just concerned about monetary gains but also has a humanitarian side to it." With this collaboration *Just Dial* plans to leverage not just on Mr. Bachchan's creative skills in promoting their brand but also his personality as one of the most respected and successful actors in the country.

### **THE PATH AHEAD: MOVING TO THE US MARKET**

The company is now planning to launch its products in the US market. *Just Dial* has plans to hire up to 1,000 people in the US. Google already has a strong presence in the US in terms of all its search products, particularly Local Search. The *Just Dial* strategy to win the US customers is unlike other search engines like Google 411 which have a process oriented menu based Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system to receive them. But, *Just Dial* connects the user to a real person who is ready to answer queries instantly. *Just Dial* may have to face a tough time before they can actually start getting good traffic to their Local Search portals. *Just Dial* also has plans to enter other big countries such as Canada, England, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Hong Kong as part of its expansion plans over the next two years.

### **GOOGLE REMAINS A KEY THREAT**

#### **So Are the Emerging Technologies & New Products**

The world's largest search engine Google has been present in India for many years, providing search services and navigation services through Google maps. Providing local search services in any country is not difficult for a global player like Google. In India, it introduced IVR-based local search service in Hyderabad in April 2008. However, it was unable to achieve scale, making the business unviable. As a result, it closed this service in December 2010. Globally, Google's search services are based on technology while the search market in India requires collection and maintenance of the database through feet-on-street and voice-based search options. Hence, the probability of Google re-entering the local search market is low but any such move by Google needs to be monitored closely. It is important to note that Google is bigger than the rest of the search engines, not only because of technical reasons like superior search algorithm, but also of a superior brand positioning.

Other alternatives that will be available to Indian users are also a cause for concern for Justdial.com. These could be like Long Term Evolution (LTE) technology and affordable smart devices that could provide users more online options. LTE technology is likely to provide a boost to data usage. Also, according to the industry, players like Reliance Industries plan to offer very affordable devices (tablet PC) and cheap data

services (Rs 10 for 1GB). This may attract domestic and international companies to provide mobile applications for local search services which could potentially be another big competition for *Just Dial*. While *Just Dial* continues to keep pace with new technologies (such as android-based applications), competition from newer applications and its ability to compete with them needs close monitoring.

In relation to the above mentioned challenges, there was a call from the director to all its business heads to discuss the agenda that was grappling the entire industry. In other words, the purpose of the meeting was to increase the agility of an organisation and to prepare for the contingency where innovation and customer satisfaction is the need of the day.

### ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS

1. “If your idea is ahead of time and your product is offering value to the customer, it is a win-win proposition for the entrepreneur”. Discuss the statement in the context of *Just Dial*.
2. It is ‘comparatively easier to attain success but it is very difficult to sustain success in this information overloaded economy’. In the light of this, list the factors that increase the agility of the organisation.
3. How can a local search engine make their database listing more relevant and user friendly?
4. What are the components of a business model? Also illustrate different types of e-business models.
5. How is the ranking of a website or a web-portal done?
6. If you were the technical head of *Just Dial*, what steps would you take to overcome the competition and up-coming challenges faced by *Just Dial*?

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### Web Resources

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- [http://www.justdial.com/cms/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=209:hes-dialled-in-sunday-pioneer&catid=40:others&Itemid=411](http://www.justdial.com/cms/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=209:hes-dialled-in-sunday-pioneer&catid=40:others&Itemid=411)
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