# Problem Description

ISKCON Bangalore and the HKM temples are growing in number. Each center is increasing its preaching activities. We need to track the details of devotees in the various centers.

The following are the major processes where the information sharing is required across the organization and to the central Governing Body.

* New devotee joining the mission
* Transfer of a devotee from one center to another
* Service rendered by the devotee and change in services
* Ashram change of the devotee
* Devotee leaving the organization

Apart from this we have started initiation procedure according to the July 9th directive of Srila Prabhupada. Even Krishna Ashraya devotees, or other congregations are eligible for initiation provided they meet the prerequisites. As per July 9th letter we have to maintain a **book of** **Srila Prabhupada’s initiated disciples**. For this, we need to get information from all our center.

The challenge is how to maintain an upto date database with all these information.

# Solution Proposed

* Develop a web based application (Satvata) with look and feel of sites like Google, Gmail, Facebook etc (**easy to learn and easy to use**) where the individual temples can track the details and update it time to time.
* The application will have access rights and view privileges which determines who can see what thereby ensuring proper **security**.
* The database is maintained in a centralized server. The application is accessible via internet or MPLS. We are setting up MPLS to make ERP accessible from all centers. We have invested on the firewalls recently. Also we have Public IPs to host our application servers in the Internet. So the application can be made available via MPLS or via Internet to all the temples. Since we are anyway investing on technology we can also **use the technology** for maintaining this data which is much more significant to us than any other data.
* Encryption algorithms will be used for data which are considered **secure and confidential**.
* On the click of a button, various types of **reports** can be generated by the members of Governing Body.

# Why not Google Docs?

* Google docs is not the complete solution for the problem at hand. It will only help us to share the documents and formats. All other activities of tracking, reporting has to happen manually (which is tedious)
* It is a public space and though it allows to share private documents with limited visibility, the fact is that the documents are residing in external server.
* Since the number of devotees are increasing, at some point of time, we will require a software. And planning for a software at a later time will only increase our cost and effort in clearing the back logs.
* The responsibility of maintaining data electronically will be with GBC Secretariat. This will require constant follow up with all temples. And soon we will start losing control over the data & data will become obsolete.
* The number of physical documents stored in the central office of GBC secretariat will start growing in number. Managing them will become a humongous exercise. We must have to think of digitizing in future.

# Description of Processes

# Devotee Joining the Organization

**Evaluation:** It is upto the individual centers to decide on the checks they like to do before considering a candidate for joining. For example, in Bangalore, the prospects stay in FOLK Nivas and attend sadhana for few months and their sadhana and services are monitored.

Prospect fills form

Medical Check Up

Evaluation

Interview and Clearance

**Application:** Prospect fills the application form.

* **Form A:** Captures basic information which are mandatory.
* **Form B:** Captures additional information. It is advisable to capture these details; but it is not mandatory.
* **Form C:** Medical History. Again it is advisable to capture these details; but it is not mandatory.

**Medical Check up:** Preferably the candidate can undergo pre-induction medical check up.

**Interview and Clearance:** The candidate will be interviewed by temple president or devotee authorized by temple president who will approve the candidate’s joining the mission.

Once the above procedures are completed, the temple commander or temple president can create a profile for the devotee in Satvata (see next page for the data elements captured in profile) and upload the photo of the devotee (passport size) and the scanned documents (Form A, B, C, Clearance Record, Medical Report) whichever applicable.

# Service Change

Initially a devotee is not assigned any specific service. He will either serve as an assistant to preacher or as an assistant pujari or assistant cook etc., which can be called Bhakta Services. Then he is assigned some specific service as a preacher or cook or pujari and so on. Some of them may have services connected to management and some others may be in Akshayapatra. The details of service changes need to updated so that the Governing Body can know the devotee’s development in his services. The temple president will have facility to track the service of the devotee. He can mention the date from which the new service is in effect and whom the devotee will be reporting to.

# Ashram Change

If the devotee chooses to change his ashrama (brahmacari – grhasta – vanaprastha – sannyasa) the details can be tracked by the temple president who will update the date of changing with suitable remarks (which is encrypted and is visible only to the specific TP and the GBC)

# Transfers

The temple president or the temple commander will have access to the facility where the details of transfer of a devotee can be updated. They should update the center to which the devotee is transferred and the date from which the transfer is effective.

# Exit Details

For some reasons, if the devotee decides to leave the organization, the temple president can update the date of his leaving and the reason (which is encrypted and visible only to the specific TP and the GBC)

# Data Elements

**Devotee Profile**

Who can Access: TC, TP, GBC, Admin

Basic Information

* Name
* Father’s Name
* Date of Birth
* Place of Birth
* State of Birth
* Mother Tongue
* Religion
* Caste
* Nationality
* Marital Status
* Highest Qualification
* Institution
* Joining Details
* Date of Joining
* Center Name

Languages

* Language Known
* Speak (Y/N)
* Write (Y/N)
* Read (Y/N)

Contact Details

* Parent’s Address
* Emergency Contact
* Phone Number
* E-mail Number

ID Details

* Driving License Number
* PAN Number
* Passport Details
* Passport Number
* Issued At
* Date of Issue
* Renewal Date

Academic Details (optional)

* Examination
* University / Board
* Institution
* Year of Passing
* Main Subjects
* Percentage

Employment Details (optional)

* Employer Name
* Employer Address
* Period
* Designation
* Last Salary Drawn
* Reason for Leaving

Family Details (optional)

* Name
* Relationship
* Qualification
* Occupation
* Date of Birth
* Is Dependent? [Y / N]

**Facility to scan the documents and store.**

**Access:** TC, TP, GBC, Admin

* Application Form (Form A and Form B)
* Medical History Form (Form C)
* Interview and Clearance (Form D)
* Medical Records
* Recommendation for I initiation
* Recommendation for II initiation

Document Level Security: Visibility level of each document can be set by the person uploading the document.

**We also track the following details for the other processes**

* Current Service, Effective From, Reporting To
* Current Ashrama, Effective From, Remarks (encrypted)
* Current Center, Effective From
* Date of Exit, Remarks (encrypted)
* Initiation details (which are explained in the next page)

# Sample Screen

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# Initiation

In the July 9th Directive of Srila Prabhupada, the procedures for initiation is outlined as follows:

*Temple Presidents may henceforward send recommendation for first and second initiation to whichever of these eleven representatives are nearest their temple. After considering the recommendation, these representatives may accept the devotee as an initiated disciple of Srila Prabhupada by giving a spiritual name, or in the case of second initiation, by chanting on the Gayatri thread, just as Srila Prabhupada has done. The newly initiated devotees are disciples of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad, the above eleven senior devotees acting as His representative. After the Temple President receives a letter from these representatives giving the spiritual name or the thread, he can perform the fire yajna in the temple as was being done before. The name of a newly initiated disciple should be sent by the representative who has accepted him or her to Srila Prabhupada, to be included in His Divine Grace's "Initiated Disciples" book.*

The following are the steps involved:

1. Temple president recommends the candidate.
2. Ritvik gives the spiritual name and chants on the bead. (chanting on Gayathri thread in case of II initiation)
3. Once Temple President receives it, he can conduct fire yajna (the formalities of initiation)
4. The name of the newly initiated disciple is sent to secretary for including in Srila Prabhupada Initiated Disciple’s Book.

In **Satvata**, temple president will have a feature where he can:

1. Recommend the candidate
2. Upload the recommendation letter

The recommendation letter is sent to the GBC secretariat via post.

The GBC secretariat coordinates for the approval of the candidate.

The GBC secretariat mails the name and beads (gayathri thread in case of II initiation) to the Temple President.

In **Satvata**

1. GBC secretariat updates the status of recommended candidate as approved.

Temple president conducts the formal ceremony for initiation.

In **Satvata**

1. Temple President updates the date of ceremony and the name of the candidate.

Note: The reason for TP updating this is a) we do not want the name to be update anywhere before the ceremony b) in spite of getting approval due to various reasons the candidate may not be able to attend the formal ceremony.

1. GBC secretariat generates the entry for the initiated disciples book from the software directly.

**Note:**

We can also release many plug-ins to this major module in the future which the temple presidents can locally install and get a better control.

Some of the modules already functional in Bangalore which will integrate with this software are:

* Devotee Sadhana Tracking
* Grhasta Allowance Tracking
* Devotee Vocuher tracking

# How much should we spend on this?

In March 2009, we have initiated the optimization of resources in software division.

We planned to

1. Consolidate the application platforms, thereby optimizing the server requirements
2. Reduce the license liability, thereby reducing the risk and investment on licenses
3. Streamline the processes, so that we do a proper need analysis and cost-benefit analysis before initiating any software development projects.

In July 2009, we reduced the number of people in software division from 22 to 13 thereby reducing the cost by 45%.

By further optimizations in the subsequent 2 years time, now in July 2011, we have 9 people, out of which 2 are under TAPF rolls due to the growing requirements connected to ERP, iGiving and PET initiatives.

Number of people in ISKCON rolls:

* Janaki Vallabha Dasa (Project Manager)
* Ayyappa Dasika (Technical Manager)
* Sreedhar Sasala (Web Technology - Java)
* Sachin Saxena (Microsoft Technology - .NET)
* Ramalakshmi T (Web Technology - Java)
* Pavan Kumar (non IT support resource)
* Kumar Sushri (non IT support resource)

The non IT support resources also handle services not connectd to software team. Ex: Services connected to Donor Services, Grhasta Allowance, Managing Biometric devices for Devotee Sadhana, Devotee Joining Formalities (data entry and biometric registration) etc.

Most of the applications of ISKCON are consolidated in open source platform using Java and hence we have two people in Java. And to support few legacy applications in .NET we have one person.

The team currently functioning has minimum number of personnel required to support our systems and if we reduce further it will only give reverse effects\*. Hence it is also important to retain these people in our team.

The existing team need to be engaged so that a) we retain them by giving challenging tasks that will help them grow professionally b) the organization maximizes the output from them. Based on our effort utilization report the team is engaged only 33% to 50% on the support activities. What about the remaining 50% of time?

Since we are trying to implement the system of debiting the cost of the services to the various entities, the flow of requests have stopped. Unless it is absolutely necessary the entities do not demand for new development or changes to the existing software. Hence we can channel the available time to develop applications which are very important to us. If we do not take it up, the specific entity may not incur the cost, but the organization anyhow will incur the cost since they have to pay for this team having minimal strength.

So the decision to initiate the project can be taken on a) whether taking up this project will result in adding more people to software team b) can the project be taken up and delivered as per the convenience of the team based on their extra time available c) are we maximizing the return on our investments in the existing people in software division. The software division will not initiate the project without approvals if it will result in recruiting more people.

(Easing the e-mail coordination – Report in Excel format - Circulars)

\*Suppose if we remove a person A who is being paid x amount and replace him with B getting x/2, it may apparently look like the organization is saving 50% of the cost. But the new person will lack the knowledge of the applications and the may not be able to support the applications as efficiently as A (what A can do in 1 hour B may take 4 hours just because he does not have enough exposure to our organization and the applications used here) thereby resulting in additional cost to the organization. And by the time he gains the required efficiency we may be paying him almost closer to x.