Dabbawalas Case-Study
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Mumbai commuters are burdened with lengthy commutes and overcrowded trains making it impossible to carry their dabbas to work. Stakeholders are commuters with interests of quality meals at a reasonable price, and dabbawalas with interests of working hard because of religious and monetary incentives. Dabbawalas leveraged infrastructure, information infrastructure, organizational factors, and institutional factors to find an extraordinarily efficient way to solve this problem, which allows them to provide a cheap system of delivering the dabbas on time.

The coding system on the lid of dabbas is a form of information infrastructure that allows illiterate dabbawalas to eliminate ambiguity in operations while reducing errors. Another form of information infrastructure is dabbawala's knowledge of geography and transportation, allowing them to deliver dabbas on time without errors. Transportation infrastructures included roads, bicycles, trains, etc., which determined where the "hub and spoke process model" was implemented to optimize prompt delivery of dabbas.

An organizational factor is that dabbawalas have to "buy-in" with 10 times their expected monthly income. This makes sure applicants are serious about their position which will result in reliable workers. Another organizational factor is the flat management structure, which essentially allowed dabbawalas to manage themselves resulting in flexibility and lowered costs. Religious beliefs of dabbawalas are an Institutional factor increasing dependability. Dabbawala's religion views giving food as a virtue, this gives them a sense of identity making them devoted to their work.

Dabbawala's solution was a remarkable success through optimizing and standardizing operations by exploiting infrastructure, information infrastructure, organizational factors, and institutional factors. With less than one mistake every 6 million deliveries dabbawalas shouldn't incorporate new technology. "Some business school students suggested we use motorcycles instead of bicycles," recalls Raghunath Medge. "But then our people would have to learn how to use them, get driver's licenses, deal with the Regional Transport Office, and costs would increase." This shows how new technology can add variables that don't fit the requirements.

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