



JBS GROUP: A COMPANY WITH A DIFFERENCE

Samir J Shah
Director, JBS Group Of Companies

In this interview, Samir Shah discusses the philosophy upheld by his group of companies, how diversity and inclusion are fostered among the workforce, as well as the benefits and satisfaction that come with working for the JBS Group.

Please share with us your journey with the JBS group of companies.

The group was founded in 1957 by my father. My brother joined the group in 1969 and I followed in 1982. I had 2 seniors who were very clear that you get to work at JBS not basis your birth but the value system that was established.

We work in a domain driven industry and not one based on relationships. Good, honest, compliant work has been our driving mantra.

We have faith in our ability, and in our office colleagues, and trust everyone till they prove us wrong.

We work to our satisfaction and not that of our clients since we set higher standards for ourselves and believe that if we are satisfied our clients will always be satisfied.

Ensuring that our clients pay on time as agreed is as important as us paying our vendors on time.

Four decades in the company has been for me an enriching, satisfying journey where sharing and collective good has always been the drivers.



As a firm believer in diversity and gender equality, how do you implement it in your day-to-day work?

The belief developed over the years - It is an ongoing process. For starters, in our 7 decades journey, we have not looked at gender or age while employing.

There are no differences in salaries or work profiles based on gender. The job profile is explained clearly and only when there is an agreement that the entire profile will be followed do we confirm the employment.

If the job profile includes going out on sales, to the bank, operations, outside training, outstation, seminars, etc. the same has to be followed irrespective of gender.

This equality percolates from the office assistant level to the top.



We encourage working only during office hours – men are also discouraged from working late. Men are encouraged to leave on time and be participative in family responsibilities. We have had a few colleagues marrying within the organization but flings, flippancy, casual relations, teasing are not permitted. Separate facilities are created for women and small concessions are made for their specific needs. We do not differentiate on gender.

You are committed to mentoring young students; what fosters your commitment, and why is mentoring important?

A mentor is an experienced person who advises and helps somebody with less experience over a period of time. It is a continual process.

Mentors share their own experiences and learnings, rather than domain knowledge. It would be futile to be experienced and retain the experiences and learnings for oneself only.

Such a narrow way of thinking is very detrimental to society and the generations to come after you. If there are no learnings from the past, how do we take the present forward?

When we were young, we had so many informal mentors – grandparents, uncles, aunts, neighbours, strangers, etc. besides our parents and teachers.

Such a support system is fast vanishing. The youth too have little respect for any advice. Each wants to learn from his own journey only – this is encouraging but limiting also.

There is a tendency to assume that everything done by the earlier generation is wrong. Actions are always taken in the present based on present circumstances and not with a future appraisal in mind. Taking advice is fast tracking your growth.

Use the learnings of others to give yourself an exposure and make your own journey.

My work, interests, interactions, travels, and experiences have shaped me into what I am today. My asset which can be my legacy is my learnings which I need to share during my lifetime. For me, this is living my legacy.



Can you tell us about your company's commitment to gender diversity and inclusion?

We have followed gender equality. Inclusion has always been followed in our organisation from inception. We have always employed people on merit and the ability to deliver and grow. As a group, the number of women has always been higher than in similar companies, rising from 20% in the 1980s to 45% today.

Our commitment is to individuals who are sincere, consistent and have a desire to grow – gender was and remains inconsequential. We did not realise we were following a particular trend 6 decades ago. It is how we are it is not a commitment thought.

How does your company and group promote a supportive and inclusive environment for all genders?

Our focus is on 'teaching the boys how to behave'. We have many storytelling sessions



where men are encouraged to share their experiences especially those from very traditional patriarchal families on the learnings of the office which they use to implement changes at home. We have had many resignations from men who did not believe in equality.

The sharing that happens between the genders has far-reaching changes in the family structure of both genders.

Equality and Inclusion are not only on gender, but religion, financial status and social beliefs as well.

Have you faced any challenges in implementing gender diversity initiatives, and if so, how have you addressed them?

We have never had such an issue. The team members all understand that we work on ability and do not see the gender. The culture of our organisation does not permit anyone to even consider raising such questions.

If there is a disagreement, our experience is the person proactively resigns.

Can you share some success stories or examples of how gender diversity has positively impacted your group of companies?

The majority of our documentation, admin, accounts and supervisory staff are women. We have 30% of our middle management team led by women. It is a welcome change for clients and visitors to see so many women attend to their work. Many women have been with us for over 18 to 20 years.

We even call their families annually for office events. We show interest in our team members not only during office hours but outside of that too.

Is there any advice you would like to share with the young readers about making a career in maritime and logistics?

If you are open to being challenged and engaged on a daily basis and being surprised every day, then this is the career for you. This industry gives you a sense of pride especially when you see your country growing in comparison to the others. We all dream of India being one of the largest economies of the world. Participating here would be our contribution.

