
Strategic Management Workshop for Indian Railways

About the Organization

Indian Railways is a state-owned enterprise that operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Railways. It operates one of the largest railways networks in the world and is also one of the largest commercial employer in the world.

Background

With growth in the Indian economy and population, there are increasing pressures on the transportation sector to respond to the growing demands of transporting freight and people over the length and breadth of the country. At the same time, since the organization is a government undertaking it is also expected that maintains tariffs that are affordable and propels economic growth.

The organization approached ISB for training its officers in the Senior Administrative group, with experience of 20-22 years. The government undertaking felt that given the current economic changes, these senior officers needed to enhance their strategic management perspective to perform their jobs more effectively. The undertaking also felt that these senior administrative officers should have holistic perspective of their organization, with a broad understanding of the functions of other departments and learn how to work in a collaborative manner with other departments,

In keeping with the above, the client approached ISB to develop a Strategic Management Workshop for its Grade A officers.

Objectives of the Programme

The broad intent of this Programme was to get officers in Senior Administrative Group (SAG) of this government undertaking to develop competencies and skills that focus on three objectives – developing strategic thinking / orientation, developing cross-functional perspective, and managing complexity and uncertainty in their current roles. Each of these skills has relevance to the job of these officers. For instance, strategic orientation - the ability to balance the short term with the long term is relevant as these officers have to help make decisions impacting other departments, on capital investment in new equipment and technologies that have both long term and short term impact. In addition, SAG officers have to face uncertainty in their day to day operations which range from sudden fluctuations in customer demand to supply chain disruptions because of labour/political turmoil. These SAG officers were also required to think beyond their own departments, and coordinate with / involve people from other departments. The Programme was therefore required to enhance capabilities of SAG officers to work across different functional silos.

The Programme aimed to develop a general manager's perspective by providing inputs from different functional perspectives, addressing the following objectives:

- Develop strategic orientation – understanding and balancing long-term & short-term goals of the organisation
- How to execute defined strategy through a customer-focused approach, by building lasting relationships with internal and external customers; and by learning best practices in operational excellence
- Learn how to create value for stakeholders, through understanding of the implications of managerial decisions on value creation, and how to make financially viable project proposals / decisions, for creating value
- Learning how to lead change and transformational efforts, by becoming a role-model and inculcating ownership and pride in their teams, to achieve superior results

Programme Design

In response to this brief from the customer, the ISB worked on a design of the Programme. ISB assembled a team of faculty with a mix of functional expertise and understanding of both the India and global perspectives.

The design was shared with the client who gave their unequivocal support for the design. The Programme was then held at ISB's campus in Hyderabad over a period of 6 days.

In addition to class-room based inputs, guest speakers were also invited to provide participants a practitioners' perspective.

Module 1: Leadership and Change Management

This module is aimed at discussing the lessons that have emerged from practice and research in the area of change management:

- To gain key insights into change process and types of resistance
- To develop a more concrete view of what impacts different actions/ interventions have on (a) bringing forward movement in change; and (b) minimizing/ overcoming resistance
- To sharpen the understanding of Emotional Intelligence frameworks; To help participants reflect on their own leadership style (through use of a questionnaire) and what the strengths and weaknesses of these leadership styles are

Module 2: Financial Value Creation

The module is structured around following themes:

- Rationale Underlying Value Creation as the primary objective for Resource Allocation decisions
- Measurement of Value Creation by using Discounted Cash Flow Techniques—NPV and IRR
- Understanding of linkage between Operating decisions and Value Creation as it applies to the client organization
- Understanding of Public Private Partnership in Project Management and Value Creation

Case studies were used as a background to describe and explain relevance for foregoing objectives.

Module 3: Operations and Supply Chain

The purpose of the Operations & Supply Chain module is to investigate the challenges facing the client organization and how to overcome it, and to learn from the best practices in operational excellence in around the world, particularly in the area of service delivery. The following are the major themes around which this module is designed:

- Delivering World Class Services
- Time based Competition
- The Role of IT on Business Strategy & Efficiency

Module 4: Customer Focused Marketing Strategy

This module tries to bring in a better understanding on how marketing can be a planning platform for a public agency that wants to meet citizen needs and deliver real value.

The module is structured around the central theme of understanding how value is created for customers. It provides exposure to participants on two inter-related themes:

- Marketing Strategy, Customer Centricity, and Customer Value
- Market Focused Organization and Customer Satisfaction

Module 5: Strategic Thinking and Implementation

The strategy component of the Programme is focused both on planning and execution aspects. It is woven around the following themes:

- Corporate Vision, Performance and Strategy
- Strategic Thinking
- Strategy Implementation

Summary and Impact

As the organization embarks on an ambitious growth plans for itself and for India, senior officers within this public sector undertaking need to enhance their strategic management and leadership skills to lead the organization in a challenging environment.

The Strategic Management workshop provides all the necessary cross functional skills, business acumen and strategic management perspective required deliver more effectively for the organization and for the country as a whole.

The Programme has met with extremely positive response from the participants. The client organization has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with ISB for five successive years to deliver the same course to its senior administrative officers.