

# Why customers backed Mahindra Satyam BPO



*Mahindra Satyam BPO was recently adjudged as India's most customer responsive BPO company. Vijay Rangineni, CEO, shares how he worked around recent setbacks and motivated his associates to give their best*

Let me start with an admission – I am a firm believer in the basics. As a result, you will find that we have followed some very simple thumb rules of management and organization building. However, where we have succeeded is in *implementing* these simple rules every single day of our lives at work; and that is because I believe that great customer service is not an 'initiative' or 'direction' given by top management, but a culture that is built, demonstrated and encouraged consistently.

In light of the crisis that hit Satyam in January 2009, customers expressed their concerns around business continuity. There were fears of mass attrition, low motivation levels and a possible dip in service levels.

This was unfamiliar territory for us. Ever since our inception in 2002, we have been among the Top 3 service providers globally (in terms of service level adherence) for most of our clients. Pre-January 2009, there was a shared feeling that Mahindra Satyam BPO could be trusted to deliver on the most complex processes. We found ourselves answering questions on the continuity of the organization!

We realized that the best way to answer every question was by doing the simple things right, and focusing on meeting our SLAs. We recognized the three key levers to delivering consistent services: Proactive communication; leadership involvement and increased ownership by associates.

## Proactive communication

We realized early on that much of the apprehension among stakeholders was on account of speculative media reports, physical distance with customers (based in US and Europe) and lack of consistent information from credible sources. We took immediate steps to address this situation:

- Invited the Government-appointed Board to personally interact with associates and allay their concerns
- Brought customers on the phone with members of the Board, and encouraged open discussions
- Created a 'Rumors Quashed' section on our website to provide the company's view on speculative media reports
- Sent periodic mails to customers with latest updates

These measures helped us get our key stakeholders' minds away from the speculation, and focus on the job at hand, i.e., deliver consistent services.

## Leadership involvement

We realized the need for senior - and mid-level leaders to spend more and more time on the floor, engaging with associates in a free

and frank manner, understanding their concerns and providing real-time answers wherever available. If there was ever a time for our leaders to lead by example, this was it!

Leaders were accordingly empowered with regularly updated FAQs touching upon multiple aspects of relevance to associates – salary payments, business continuity, customer retention, and others. The end objective was to demonstrate to associates that their leaders genuinely felt their concerns, and would go to any length to give them the support they needed, especially from the perspective of the relatively young age of our associates, this was a key focus area.

## Increased ownership by associates

We went by a simple philosophy – "In service organizations, great service is about each associate giving his best to each customer interaction". This was critical in a situation where we were being scrutinized more closely than ever. We kicked off a host of initiatives to sustain the faith, morale and enthusiasm among associates:

- Periodic Rewards and Recognition programs to set an example of associates delivering against all odds
- Encouraged an open door policy, starting with me
- Conducted timely appraisals for associates, in a year, when several other organizations did not (on account of the economic slowdown)
- Enhanced our focus on metrics, and created a process to address service level dips at the earliest
- Undertook several initiatives to create an environment of positivity and trust

## The result

- Over 94% of our business-critical SLAs are in the green – consistent over the last 18 months
- Customer satisfaction scores stand at 86.34% – above the industry benchmark of 83.8%
- We renewed contracts with all our key customers for anywhere between 2 and 5 years

Our recent success as "**India's Most Customer Responsive BPO Company**" tastes just that bit sweeter when one considers that the winning organization was chosen based on feedback by customers of all nominated organizations. And what better testimonial can there be than the voice of a satisfied customer.

*The award was given at the AGC Networks Customer Responsiveness Awards 2010, organized by AGC Networks, The Economic Times, Ernst & Young and Nielsen*