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Travel Life

HOT SEAT

The art of management

With expertise in key areas of management owing to his elaborate career in the aviation industry, **J B Singh**, president and CEO, ITQ (Interglobe) believes that strategic and people management are key to the success of a company. Being associated with the travel industry, he reiterates that in the Indian scenario, a clear understanding of the dynamics of the GDS is the need of the hour. He shares his goals and objectives. By **Nupur Singh**



Possessing a rich pool of knowledge and experience spanning over 24 years with prominent players in the aviation industry, JB Singh is a graduate from Delhi University and has a management degree from the Oxford Brookes University (UK). He was preparing for CA, when he landed up in the airline industry joining Jet Airways

In early years of his career, Singh was associated with British Airways, where he worked for 12 years and later with Jet Airways as the head of North India operations. In his tenure with Jet Air, he held several positions of signifi-

cance including head of Jet Air Tours. He was the director and CEO of Calleo Distribution Technologies, a distributor of Worldspan GDS (Global Distribution System) in nine countries including the Indian Subcontinent, Mauritius, Australia and New Zealand.

He was also associated with Scandinavian Airlines for two years in the capacity of a function head for their sales and marketing operations in India. ITQ is the official distributor of Galileo and Worldspan in India and certain Asia Pacific markets. In his current role, Singh is spearheading operations at ITQ.

Technology in travel

The advent of LCC in the market has brought in the online booking habit in the country. According to Singh technology has transformed the face of Indian travel industry. He says, "Technology has facilitated the emergence of significantly large players in the country. There is however, a need to bring in a more robust system to bring down the cost."

Talking about the future trends, he remarks that, "With technology in the travel space, the number of transactions is going to grow. That is the way forward as e-commerce would continue to grow in India. Most of the industry today is fragmented but going forward we would see a lot of consolidation taking place. A lot of new entrants are coming into the industry and there are people with backgrounds in other industries. In the years to come, the industry would

see a clear divide with niche operators with smaller but high quality work.

On his association with the Interglobe, he says, "It is a structured and professionally managed company at all levels, having a distinct structure and management bandwidth in the industry with a strong vision of the future. The company invests a lot in processes and the key differentiator is the quality. At ITQ, the focus on the customer is very high and it makes sure all tools exist in the company so that the customer's needs are mapped properly."

Working towards his goals, Singh's focus till now has been to restructure ITQ the next couple of years. In the process of restructuring, the company looks forward to some focus verticals. The biggest focus area according to him has been people development. The second area of focus is on the processes. He says, "We spent a lot of time and energy mapping all our processes and making them more efficient to enable us to take faster decisions and to service the customer effectively. Also another important area is our service delivery side like technical support and we have made significant investments there."

Challenges

Travel industry in India suffers from some challenges according to Singh. He says, "We are an emerging economy and the challenge here is to cope with the forces of demand and supply and in the travel industry the bigger challenge is of infrastructure. With

the upgradation of prominent airports in the country, we can see some work done on that front but the fact remains that aviation is expanding and we still do not have the needed infrastructure to cope with that. This is because the demand is increasing due to an increase in the GDP and the per capita income, also the need to conduct business has led to an increase in the need to travel." According to him, the true potential of GDS technology has not been fully utilised in the country. GDS has much more to offer than merely booking tickets and more interest in the content and product is called for to explore the its various usages. GDS technology is needed in the travel industry.

Apart from this there is lack of information for Indian products, especially on destination. The problem is the availability of content, visuals and accessing them. Furthermore another major challenge that has stayed here for quite a while now has been of human resources. Skilled and qualified manpower is a prerequisite for organisational and structural effectiveness. He remarks, "Government policies also need to be focused on the industry as it is very important for the growth of the industry." Singh has also served as the president of SKAL Club (Delhi Chapter), and has developed a strong network in the travel industry.

In his personal arena, he is fond of rock music and reading, especially books on history. He also enjoys playing golf, photography and travelling. ■