LocalCircles

"Transforming Indian Railways"

A collective citizen perspective

Collective inputs from 100,000+ citizens of India in circle

"Make Railways Better"

July 9, 2015

Background

'Make Railways Better' is a leading community of citizens of India who are keen to see a better Indian Railways. This community was started in July 2014 and over a 10 month period has become the largest community of Indian Railways on the internet with over 100,000 citizens. Through this community, many aspects of Indian Railways have been reviewed, discussed, debated upon by the citizens and over 25 whitepapers and checklists have been generated as a result of these collective deliberations.

This whitepapers covers the key collective inputs from citizens in the following areas:

- Cleanliness
- Safety and Security
- Passenger Amenities
- Food in Trains/Stations
- Reservation and Ticketing
- Design Changes
- Transparency
- Revenue and Cost Optimization
- Productivity
- Timeliness

Community Pulse on Key Railway Priorities

A recently conducted citizen poll with over 10,000 citizen votes rated key priorities for railways as under:

1) Cleanliness – 52% votes
2) Safety – 31% votes
3) Better Reservation/Ticketing Systems – 12% votes
4) Food Quality & Hygiene - 5% votes

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Key areas of Transformation

Cleanliness of Stations and Trains

1. Cleanliness of stations, trains and toilets should be outsourced to private vendors with metrics based accountability and delivery requirements
2. Garbage bins must be installed in every compartment and cleaned 4 times a day in running trains
3. Pest control must be outsourced to professional companies and done regularly
4. Civic Sense and cleanliness related awareness must be created in trains and at stations in a significant and impactful way.
5. Open defecation at platforms must be banned and RPF must be empowered and enabled to impose a fine on spot.

Safety and Security

1. Effective awareness should be created about the Safety Helpline 182
2. Effective training in customer service is needed for call handlers and training of RPF/GRP to handle situations effectively
3. Using SMS/circle communication passengers around the passenger in distress must be alerted for emergency assistance
4. The local community must be roped in along with district administration to drive awareness about unmanned crossings
5. RPF personnel must go through regular fitness and customer service training
6. Multiple counters for security check should be put in place at railway stations
7. Passengers should be permitted to enter the platforms only an hour before the departure of the train

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8. CCTV cameras should be made operational 24X7 at every major station and platform
9. Computer controlled automatic signalling system and anti-collision devices must be used
10. Human errors by the driver must be mitigated by ensuring the co-driver is alert and actively involved in train running
11. Disaster Management communities should be enabled such that any citizen in a train or a local passer-by can mobilize help in case of train disaster.

Passenger Amenities in Trains/on Platforms

1. Agents manning the 138 helpline should be trained on customer service parameters
2. Action must be taken on all 138 requests and the complainant notified by SMS
3. Visitors must be able to purchase platform tickets online from the comfort of their homes in advance, using their mobile number/email ID
4. Wheelchairs should be made available to assist the handicap at the stations
5. Escalators where deployed must be made functional 24X7 and maintained
6. Any doctor travelling on a train as a passenger should be required to mention it while booking their ticket, so that he could be approached in case of an emergency
7. There should be at least 5-6 first aid kits on-board every train with a mobile number/person associated with each kit. In case of Emergency, the first aid kid should be made to move towards the passenger
8. Clean, bugs free and packed bed rolls must be made available along with disposable bed rolls available on purchase basis
9. RO water plants should be established at top 50 stations in the country
10. Waiting rooms at stations should be more effectively maintained.

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Food in Trains and on Stations

1. Better quality eateries should be allowed to open shops at the station
2. Clear charter, quality and service metrics should be given to catering vendors
3. Food hygiene must be maintained by ensuring that food is kept away from toilets in premium trains
4. Catering staff must be trained on service and trained to not demand tips as a right
5. CCTV should be installed in the pantry cars
6. Regular surprise quality checks of the pantry should be done by senior officials

Ticketing and Reservation

1. Selection of seats and berth graphically should be allowed on IRCTC like in the airlines
2. The CAPTCHA should be removed and some other security feature should be put in to make the login process faster on IRCTC site
3. Senior citizens should be guaranteed lower births, pending availability
4. The mobile experience of the IRCTC site should be better optimized as lots of people come via smartphones/tablets
5. Ticket vending machines should be installed at the stations and mobile app for ticketing implemented pan India to ease the crowd on the ticket windows
6. Emergency quota bookings should be made available via web/centralized numbers rather than citizens chasing Railway officials at stations
7. Emergency quota seats must be reduced by 75% to 15,000 seats per day to prevent misuse. Except MP/MLA/Govt Official and Death/Medical needs, all Emergency quota seats should be priced at Premium Tatkal rates.
8. Unused Emergency quota seats must be added to Premium Tatkal pool 24 hours before the train.

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9. Some refund for Tatkal cancellations must be considered as it will lead to additional revenue for Railways and minimize TTE corruption opportunities
10. 120 days advance booking rule should be reverted back to 60 days

Design Changes Required

1. Train toilets should be redesigned
2. The design of many coaches is more than 100 years old; should be re-designed for hygiene and cleanliness
3. Taps with sensors should be installed in trains and on platforms to reduce water wastage
4. Waterless urinals should be installed on stations and inside trains
5. The chain pulling system should be replaced with an emergency alarm/intercom system
6. All platforms should have full length weather sheds
7. Pantry inside the train should be redesigned to maintain hygiene and cleanliness

Transparency

1. Railways must have every employee go through Ethics Training and Recommitment every year along with an undertaking
2. "Say no to Corruption" hotline must be created and publicized in Railways offices, reservation centers, stations, trains, etc.
3. Railway vigilance must be invigorated through training, technology and practices like mystery audits for passenger and freight services to find instances of corruption
4. The tendering process should be completely computerised and made transparent so that the best party could get the contract and railway could save money
5. Railways should move away from the lowest cost bidder to the bidder who meets the defined criteria/quality

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6. Free travel passes used by Railway officials and their families must be effectively tracked via an electronic system

7. Citizen reporting of corruption events by TTE/RPF, etc. must be enabled through a website/mobile app or a community circle with Railways Vigilance's active participation, follow up, redressal and citizen communication

8. All freight transactions should be systems based with effective audit systems to minimize Business-Railway Staff collusion.

Revenue and Cost Optimization Opportunities

1. The inside and outside of the trains could be used for advertisements like the Delhi Metro

2. Installation LCD display in chair cars and use it to display time/station and advertisements

3. Platform tickets and journey tickets can have advertisement at the back

4. Branding of trains and stations

5. Catalog based shopping in trains in partnership with leading e-Commerce companies with Railways getting a small commission per order

6. Chargeable wi-fi services could be started in trains and on platforms

7. The fines collected from passengers should be collected against receipts so that the right amount could be reported

8. Introduce Roll on and Roll off (RORO) services in all major freight corridors. This will reduce road congestion and also will increase revenue to the railways

9. The steel, iron and other waste material lying by the tracks across the country should be put to use or sold off thereby converting waste to wealth.

10. The idle running time of the trains should be minimised

11. Existing lighting on stations as well as platforms should be changed to LED tights to save on power consumption

12. Freight loading and passenger loading should be increased by 10-20%

13. Freight booking should be made online and hassle free for businesses

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Increasing Productivity of Railways

1. Toilets in trains should be changed to vacuum toilets so that the large workforce involved in cleaning could be used somewhere else
2. Average running speed of the trains should be increased
3. KRAs of every Railway employee should be clearly defined with performance based incentives and annual increments
4. Promotions should be de-linked from years served and linked to performance delivered
5. The existing workforce should be reskilled and redeployed through training in areas like Cleanliness, Call Center, Safety, Information Technology, Sales on board, etc
6. Railways should achieve additional 20% revenue with the same work force
7. More effective file tracking systems should be established to expedite decision making within the organization

Timeliness of Trains

1. Railways must not yield into demands from politicians to add stops to trains and every stop should have demand driven justification
2. Automatic signalling should be installed in all trunk routes
3. Self-propagating trains such as DEMU, MEMU, EMU should be made as 12/15/18 coaches so it could carry more load.
4. Stoppages at major stations should be shortened
5. Speed of the existing trains should be increased
6. Track maintenance software should be used to monitor scheduled maintenance
7. Trains must not be delayed due to late arrival of VIPs at any cost

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