

INMOBI – A CLASS APART

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of tackling mobile advertising from India was an alien idea during the 2000s. The concept itself was unknown to the country and the challenges ahead were unimaginable. InMobi was established against all odds in the year 2007. Even though venture capital was extremely difficult and challenging to get and most of the investors were quite skeptical when it came to the concept of a mobile advertising company from India, the establishment of InMobi required a lot of passion from its founders and a futuristic vision.

InMobi is a mobile advertising and discovery platform backed by Soft Bank, Kleiner Perkins Caufield Byers and Sherpalo Ventures. InMobi has a reach of 1.5 billion customers and provides a data centric ability to discover new products and services by providing contextual and personalized advertising experiences on mobile phones.

Having being established in 2007, the Company has around 20 offices world over. The organization has received various awards and recognition over the years and some of the most notable ones are:

- 2013: Recognized on the MIT Technology Review's 50 Disruptive Company's List
- 2014: Forbes India Leadership Award for 'Outstanding Start Up'
- 2016: Named Number 15th on the Fast Company's list of "The World's Most Innovative Companies"
- 2016: Featured in 'India's Top 100 Companies to Work For 2016' by Economic Times – Great Places To Work Institute

INMOBI TIMELINE

2007: Founded as mKhoj, an SMS based search and monetization business in Mumbai, India.

2008: The Company grew from 8 to 50 people. Four offices across the globe were set up.

2009: mKhoj gave rise to Inmobi.

2009: Presence was expanded to Europe

2010: Enters into USA Market

2011: Acquisition of Sprout. Relunched as Inmobi Studio. It helps in creating immersive and engaging ad experiences.

2013: Acquisition of Overlay Media

2014: Powered by Rubicon, Inmobi launched the world's largest Mobile Native Advertising Exchange.

2015: Open source launch of organisation culture YaWiO. It enables start-ups to get a look into the work culture of Inmobi.

2015: Miip, a discovery platform was launched

THE STORY

Mr. Naveen Tewari, Mr. Abhay Singhal, Mr. Amit Gupta and Mr. Mohit Saxena popularly known as "The Boys with a PPT" started off with their Entrepreneurial journey in 2007 in the Financial Capital of India, Mumbai, against all odds. InMobi was born and was founded as mKhoj, which was an SMS based monetization business. InMobi started with 8 people and just within a year it became a 50 employee organization with four offices across the world. The founders had the ability to think big and long and had tremendous abilities to capture nascent markets. As a result, in no time InMobi made its presence across the globe within a year. The very next year, 2009, mKhoj was rechristened as InMobi. The quick and prompt realization by the founders with regard to the extreme potential in the mobile advertising business contributed towards the birth of InMobi.

In the year 2010, InMobi made its entry into the land of opportunities; the United States of America with the sole intention to challenge the world's biggest advertising market by threatening the status quo in the industry. The founders had a dream of making InMobi a truly global Indian Company and in the process they faced serious challenges and rejection. Almost every Venture Capitalist rejected the idea and when faced with a serious situation they ultimately were successful in convincing Ram Shriram of Sherpalo and got Funding of around \$8 Million from Sherpalo Ventures and Kleiner Perkins Caufield Byers.

This saw the birth of the dream of making InMobi a truly Global Indian Company. There was no stopping ahead post the realization of the Dream. Very next year, 2011, Mr. Naveen Tiwary was named amongst the World's 50 most influential executives in Mobile content; a list that boasts of other business heads and stalwarts from Companies like Google, Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Twitter, etc. In the same year, it acquired Sprout, an organization that used to offer a user friendly platform for building HTML based advertising. This platform was later relunched

as InMobi Studio and it helped big organizations to create award winning rich media based advertisement experiences. 2011 also witnessed the birth of India's first B2B unicorn company. SoftBank invested \$200 Million in InMobi. They recognized InMobi's immense capability and hard work in retaining and acquiring the best talents globally.

In 2013 InMobi acquired Overlay Media, an expert in context aware computing. This acquisition helped InMobi to be the leader in providing highly engaging content to its consumers, globally.

Recognition followed during the same year when it was recognized by MIT Technology as one of the 50 most Disruptive Companies. It was the only Indian Company to make that list and also the only advertising technology company in the World mentioned in the list. In 2014, InMobi exchange was launched. It was the World's first mobile buying and selling platform and the first exchange to support buying native advertisements. This launch was powered by Rubicon Project. 2015 witnessed the launch of the organizational culture, YaWiO, which means to Dream Big, Unite Passionately and Taking complete ownership of your actions. During the same year, InMobi became the only mobile advertising platform to reach 1 Billion plus unique mobile devices. The Discovery Platform, Miip was launched in 2015; a revolutionary commerce product which enabled consumers to discover, buy and experience products and services.

HUMAN RESOURCES – THE MAIN DIFFERENTIATOR

Human resources are the greatest assets to any organization and the success of any organization depends upon the quality and the maintenance of this asset. It is always important for any organization to sign up or recruit the right people for the right position.

During the first four years of InMobi till 2012, it is not that that the founders of InMobi were hiring the right people, but since the enormous growth of the company it was becoming more cumbersome for the founders to lead the people as the numbers were becoming larger. In just four months between April 2012 to July 2012 the number of employees surged from 200 to around 900 since InMobi was on a hiring spree to meet up to the expectations of a massive growth trajectory.

This sharp growth in employee headcount came at the cost of a disconnected culture and workforce. As a result there was a lot of unrest and inefficiency. As a step towards and attempt to curb the chaos and unrest the company tried to implement some Human Resources policies and structures, but that slowed down the company even further.

The founders realized their failure to manage the growth by creating an encouraging a culture that nurtured the growth and potential of everyone at the company. Soon corrective measures were taken which included some really bizarre policies to recruit, retain, engage and reward its employees. During the last three years of its existence InMobi had experimented with some

extremely new, refreshing and counter intuitive policies and structures. They also realized that to take on giants like Facebook and Google, their Human Resources Management had to be quite disruptive and innovative.

PEOPLE PRACTICES AT INMOBI

According to John Sullivan, professor of management at San Francisco State University in a recent presentation titled “People Management Practices from Google, Facebook and Apple” stated "if you focus on measure and reward performance, you won't have attendance issues". Facebook is known world over as an organization that does not track employee attendance at all. InMobi has initiated its own guidelines with regard to employee attendance. According to their guidelines an employee does not require an approval from his supervisor for up to six days of leave. Moreover, everybody gets a 100% bonus except the Sales team as their bonus depends on their Sales performance. The Performance Appraisal rating system was abolished in 2013.

There is no restriction on International travel expenses as well. Employees can travel and spend as they please. A bizarre policy was that if a new recruit at InMobi leaves the company within a month, then he is eligible for a quitting bonus, which is a three month’s salary to quit.

The desire to start up something of your own is ever growing. InMobi is a strong supporter for budding entrepreneurs. If any employee wants to quit InMobi to start something of his own, a new venture, the organization does everything possible to support them. They do not take away their access cards, instead they are happy to provide them with free office space, allow them to intermingle and brainstorm with their ex – colleagues and even allow them to eat the free cafeteria food.

InMobi has also fashioned its very own people culture called YaWiO, which means Imagination (haYa in Turkish) Oneness (aWirodhin in Sanskrit) and Action (Opus in Latin). All the people’s initiative taken by InMobi reflects the YaWiO culture that they live the culture of Imagination, Openness and Action. They also organize a cultural fest called YaWiO – x.

The organization had a 10 page document which detailed the foreign travel policy listing out the expense limit in each country. On a day, they decided to get rid of the policy document and allowed employees to spend at their will and wish. It was surprisingly seen that only 2 out of a 1000 employees actually overspent and that gave a big relief towards the fear of over spending. In a similar fashion the data regarding the past leave approvals were analyzed by the HR department. They found out that around 90% of the leaves were below 6 days and out of these around 99% of the leaves were approved by the supervisors. Based on that, the company decided that leaves of up to 6 days will not require an official approval of the supervisor.

**"We took away that power from the managers. Nobody misses it anymore,"
says Kevin Freitas, director, human resources, InMobi.**

Learning and growth opportunity are the two things that InMobi strives for. As part of its constant endeavor to provide plenty of learning and growth opportunities for its employees, they introduced the bridge assignment, as a part of which employees have the opportunity to take up short term projects (3 months projects) alongside their day jobs. So, an HR professional can take up a bridge assignment in Operations, a Marketing professional can take up a bridge assignment in Operations and so on. This helps the organization to break down silos and nurture the free flow of ideas and people.

Some of the other innovative, disruptive and game changing people practices are:

- **Enjoying Freedom with Responsibility:** Employees don't need their supervisor's approval for up to six days of leave.
- **Bridge Opportunities:** Alongside their normal role, the employees can take up internships in other functions. So, someone in HR can learn about Sales, Finance or Product Management. It gives them first-hand experience.
- **Performance Appraisal:** Performance Appraisal at Inmobi is done through conversations. Its focus is not on assessing the past but on how to improve growth in the future. Ranking, and other traditional methods of performance appraisal are eliminated. The employees measure themselves on the goals that they set for themselves. And conversations with peers and managers reflects a deep desire to improve, and get feedback to attain and work positively towards that aspiration.
- **Encourage Entrepreneurship:** Inmobi offers free office space, to interact and brainstorm for ex-employees who want to start a new venture. The company facilitates their entrepreneurial journey.
- **Referral Bonus:** Employees are rewarded with exciting experiences such as trip for two in Europe, Scuba Diving in Andaman, when they successfully refer bright talent for recruitment.
- **Boomerang:** Boomerang is an employee who returns to work for a former employer. Inmobi hires ex-employees as they quickly adapt to the practices and culture of the organisation again. 3% of InMobians are Boomerangs.

- **Vibrant Workplace:** The workplace is designed to enable free communication without any barriers like hierarchy. There are no cabins. The creativity is illustrated in the paintings, funky colours, quirky seating arrangements and meeting rooms
- **Hackathon:** It is an annual event. It helps in recruiting engineers. It exposes them to the work culture of the organisation before being hired. This promotes development of new ideas.
- **Founders Staff Program:** It is a program which enables people to learn the culture first hand and see how the founders operate. Opportunity is given to work closely with one of the founders for a year, before assuming a bigger role at InMobi. This ensures there is no hierarchy in communication.
- **Quarterly Communication on State of Business:** Employees are informed about the state of the business, the ups and downs, through quarterly reports. This creates a sense of belongingness among the employees. And helps them take informed decisions.
- **Flexible Work Timings:** There is no attendance system or swipe systems at InMobi. Employees can work at a time convenient to them.
- **Feedback Survey:** InTrust is the name of the anonymous employee feedback and engagement survey. It is one way of getting this feedback directly from employees. InTrust is a simple app survey through which InMobians share their feedback about various aspects of working at InMobi. The survey is employee's opportunity to tell what they think. It is voluntary.
- **Live Your Potential:** As per the Live Your Potential philosophy, all open job opportunities at InMobi are shared with all InMobians. These are updated as and when a new role is open for hiring. All InMobians who have spent 12 months in their current role are free to apply on the portal. InMobi gives its employees the opportunity of applying to new roles within the company with different teams to give InMobians the opportunity to live their fullest potential.
- **InMobi Clubs:** InMobi has different clubs like Wellness club, Music Club, Travel Club, Cycling Club, and Runners Club. It helps in bringing people together. There are also spa, yoga and Zumba classes
- **Open Recognition:** When an employee does a great job, he or she is acknowledged and rewarded openly. They receive awards from the founders and on a large platform in front of the entire office to give them the recognition they deserve. There is also a wall of fame where all their pictures with their awards go up. They get to display these certificates and awards on their desk spaces to feel they achieved something great and to feel recognized. The awards are called Oscar, Emmy Award, Golden Globe and Red Carpet Award.
- **Birthday Celebrations:** Balloons are put up on the desk. In the evening at a particular time of the day when everyone is free, the whole team gathers around to make the day extra special for him/her.

- Pet Friendly: The office is pet friendly. Employees are encouraged to bring their pets to work

Transforming the culture at InMobi has fetched InMobi plenty of awards and recognition. Some of them are;

- a) 2016 NASSCOM Award for Best Practices in Talent Management
- b) 2016 Rank #95 in Best Workplaces in India by ET and Great Place To Work Institute
- c) 2016 Rank #2 in Media Industry for Best Workplaces in India by ET and Great Place To Work Institute
- d) 2016 Winner of Workplace Transformation in Best Workplaces in India Study
- e) 2016 Asia Recruitment Award Winner for Best Employer Brand
- f) 2016 Asia Recruitment Award Finalist for Best Staff Referral Program
- g) 2015 People Matters Award Winner for Best in Social Hiring
- h) 2015 People Matters Award Winner for Best in Employer Branding
- i) 2015 People Matters Award Finalist for Best in Recruitment Reengineering.
- j) 2015 Economic Times – Recognised as one of the Most Innovative companies in India for our People practices

THE ROAD AHEAD

This is an era of job hopping and war for stellar talent. Every company, startup or mature is investing a lot of effort, time and money in attracting and retaining top talent across the country. In this environment, it will be a tough ask of any company to continue to be a preferred employer for all times. InMobi by focusing on its culture to attract top talent is making culture its competitive advantage and its calling card. The company has taken various innovative steps and policies to attract, retain, develop, reward and recognize talent and is confident of attracting the best talent.

Our people are our culture and our culture is our brand.

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Kevin Freitas, director – human resources

The creation of world class employee practices needs strong amplification. And InMobians are encouraged to participate in the employee advocacy program at InMobi. The program helps InMobians share culture and business news with their networks. This open sharing of culture and life at InMobi ensures that prospective employees learn about the culture of the organization and the company continues to build a thriving culture that attracts top talent for years to come.

