

Managing Last Leg of the Race

Dr. Mohan was working on another book for working managers, who were scattered all across the country, many of whom did not have opportunity to go through formal management education and may not have any appreciation of the strategic management subject which was useful for all the managers and a compulsory course in all recognised management programmes in India.

Problem in Delivery of the Book to User

After finishing the book he uploaded it on printer's website for online distribution. The E-book was also uploaded. He then ordered the book at his Bangalore address. The book however was not printed within 3-5 days but took 8 days as a result it did not reach within expected time. By the time it reached the address after 12 days of order, Dr. Mohan had left Bangalore for Lucknow.

He had planned for launch of the book at Lucknow on 8th October. In anticipation, therefore, he ordered another copy for printing and delivery to Lucknow address. This time the book was printed within stipulated time and despatched on 5th October by FedEx courier. The book was claimed to have been delivered on Sunday, 7th October, at 5 p.m. at librarian of IMP. However, on enquiry the librarian surprised by saying that no book was received. No one at FedEx or the Printers was able to help and explain where the book had gone. [Copy of the delivery showed that it was received by the librarian who refused that it was his signature.](#) For delivery in library, one had to pass through two security checks, one at the main gate and the other at the library security gate. No record of anyone from FedEx having crossed the two security gates was found. The launch was therefore deffered. The experience was too shocking to Dr. Mohan. If ordered by him for his own institute library does not reach destination, what might be the fate of other people ordering it. He started losing faith in the online prepaid delivery of his book through printer who could be contacted only through email (no personal contact or telephonic/mobile contact was entertained).

About three weeks the Printers informed that they will send a fresh copy. Dr. Mohan requested it to be sent by speed post. The book was despatched on 24th and reached Lucknow on 27th, But could be delivered

only on 1.11.18 as the system at post office was down for 5 days. Dr. Mohan had a class on 2.11.18. with doctoral students in which he wanted to explain how to publish a book. On hearing the Post Office that the book has been delivered to library, he rushed to library hiring a taxi as he could not drive due to ill health. However, the Assistant Librarian refused to give him the book which Dr. Mohan had bought and send for library, as the book had to be first given an accession number, which required approval of Dean (Research), which all would take 4-5 days. The plea of next day class did not cut ice with the adamant assistant librarian. The librarian was not available and no one could reply when and where he could be contacted. The Director whom Dr. Mohan could speak, was in ICU. Unfortunately he died that evening and next days class could not take place.

In the meantime, the Head of Department of Veer Narmad University, Surat expressed desire to buy some books requiring invoice. Dr. Mohan ordered two books for them and send as complimentary copy. The books were printed and sent by FedEx. This time again the book did not reach. The web tracking showed that the delivery boy reached at 6.00 p.m. on Saturday for delivery and returned the book with remark the office was closed.

Dr. Mohan now got nervous. If a worldwide reputed courier is not delivering the books to leading institutions in major cities like Lucknow and Surat, its end of online sale of the his books. If the books can't reach the user on time, what is the point in writing the books itself. Some alternate method has to be found out, he felt, "else his dream of Indian Experience Based literature that can instil confidence that SM education matters will remain a dream". He was getting as much concerned about wider implications in Indian society, when the Rafael Deal Offset Clause was being debated in the country and ruling party at centre was losing ground in state elections.

Developing the Idea of Do It Yourself

After few days of sleepless nights, one day an idea occurred to him that if one could print and bind himself, it will be easy for him to do it with certainty. He therefore tried to print the file he had uploaded for the Printers, on the xeroxing machine of his travel agent with the help of travel agent and his assistant. But alas. It was on a A4 size full page printing, though with larger font size, which even an old executive could read. He made another attempt.

He wondered how the Printers are able to print the page like in the book. Few more agonising days passed. With several trials he noted the xerox machine also had a setting of “shrink the oversized pages”. He selected A4 size paper in the layout and selected the above setting. This time the print was in the same size as in the book, but at the centre of the page, which could be reduced by cutting the page on all four sides. But problem came in the form of how to cut it. He bought a paper knife. It worked but the fineness of machine cutting could not be achieved. He tried to locate book binders but they were located away from his home and he could not drive due to illness and driving to book binders was costing taxi charges as also the cutting charges.

The making of covers also proved to be a herculean task. After several days of efforts he was able to find a standard setting. If got printed on his travel agents machine, the sharpness of A3 size colour print was not achieved. Every time he had to go to established printers who were not close by. But he found in every locality of the city there was a printer available who could print on A3 size glossy paper. He felt relieved. If the user gets the soft copy of the book from through internet, downloads it and prints with prescribed settings at any roadside xeroxing service points and is able to bind it, he can make the book himself. Spiral binding options were always there, which could be used for distributing the book to the participants of regular MBA programmes and Management Development Programme. It also allowed the user to add additional material as necessary (if the material is with the same layout setting).

The problem of binding soft cover could be overcome by use of heavy duty stapling machine which is available at many xeroxing shops. Once the printed book is stapled on left side of long edge, at about [3.5 cms from the edge and then 2.7 cm slice is cut on the edge, the coloured A3 size printed cover could be pasted on the same and then the whole book could be cut from other three sides \(3 cms from the edges\)](#) to give it the shape of a formal book, available for online purchase. It however required a good quality paper cutting knife, (else the edge could be a bit rough), although it does not matter much given the other advantages. If there is a book binding shop close by with heavy duty cutting machine the book could be as good as from the publisher’s printer.

Economics of Do it Yourself

The printing cost of preparing a 274 pages book good could vary from Rs. 0.60 per page to Rs. 1.00 per page, back to back, (i.e., ranging from

Rs. 165 to about Rs. 274 for the whole book. The cost of cover printing could range from Rs. 15 to Rs. 40. The cost of cutting could be about Rs. 10 if got it done outside. In all the cost of getting the book made by oneself could range from Rs. 190 to Rs.324. The book was priced at Rs. 300/- paperback and could be purchased online, which included delivery (courier) charge ranging from Rs. 70 to 100. The cost to customer could thus range from Rs. 370 to Rs. 400. The author had slashed royalty to Rs. 7 only to keep the cost low and in round figures.

Other Advantages: Unique Features of the Book

1. Incidentally this was a book which was printed on demand (not from stock). One could thus request for [unique cover design suiting his Institute and educational/ management Development Programme.](#) The inventory carrying costs were zero and thus the price. Also economics did not emerge from bulk purchase but standalone to one copy of the book.
2. The book could be customised by selecting some chapters and combining it with chapters and cases from other books and thus making programme material in attractive yet low cost books. Indeed the instructors could add and their own work in such customised environment.
3. The delivery charges are eliminated resulting in substantial savings for individual customers.
4. The method ensures certainty in terms of availability and in most cases it can be available in one day.
5. If the user could read 10 point font, the book can be printed in A4/2, increasing ease of handling and further reducing the cost to almost half of the above figures. In this format even bank pages can be added if it spiral bound which allows participants to takes notes in the class and keep it all in one book.

It won't be difficult to read with small font size as one could have both E-version at Rs. 100 from the savings in printing cost.

6. In spiral bound version, material can be added during the course/ programmes as the need arises.
7. One does not need to print the entire book in one go. Chapters can be added as the course progresses.

Having experimented with do it yourself version, Dr. Mohan felt relieved as not only the last leg problem was resolved but it could handle even emergency situation caused by delays and the last leg problems.

What surprised Dr. Mohan was the new options it created for the user, who may be located in a remote corner of the country and wanted to understand the subject.

It also made him realise bitterly the problems of managing last leg in a vast country like India, with varied value systems and systemic obstacles of delivery. He felt the job is not done unless the last leg is managed, else it all loss and stuck investment. He wished if politician in the country had realised the problem of managing last leg because of which many good schemes fail or get delayed.

- Q1. What was the problem of managing last leg of the business?
- Q2. Why such problems may arise?
- Q3. How such problems can be resolved? What are lessons for Indian managers and policy makers?
- Q4. What is the relevance of Gandhian thought on the issue.?