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Alwar's 'Sapna'

By Osama Manzar

It amazes us when we recall the challenges that we faced before we went on to initiate a rural BPO/KPO in Alwar, Rajasthan – our very first, in partnership with Sapna, a local body which already had firm credentials of running Centres offering services ranging from health to education to library, to training youth in ICT Skills. As the challenges of training the youth, giving them meaningful opportunities, ensuring that the work comes in, supervising the overall work quality, looked more and more intimidating, the conviction to set things right got even stronger.

I recall the day the founder of Sapna, Sudhir Pratap Singh got a call from a friend who worked at Punj Loyd. The company was looking at outsourcing close to 10,000 sheets of data entry work to an agency which operated out of rural countryside. While it was soothing to know that Sapna had indeed trained more than 200 youth with ICT skills, we thought to ourselves, that we still aren't ready, with professional skills to handle this work, and certainly not prepared to handle deadlines.

No matter what we thought, Sudhir's gut worked stronger than the rest. We took the plunge. We too realized that the commitment of the youth of Alwar, was far superior than any training they needed to overcome the rawness due to lack of professional training. It took sharp supervision which lasted for a month to come to terms with challenges thrown up by the sheer volume of hand written work. While, the team is well on the course of finishing 10,000 sheets of data entry work well within the deadline, we are now on a prowl for more work. Along with a hike in the confidence, a sense of engagement and achievement too, has gripped the youth of Alwar.

For us, there is no looking back. Our dream, as well as policy decision is now towards setting up at least one rural Center in each state. The Alwar Sapna experiment is already being replicated in Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Assam amongst other states. Going forward, I would be happy to have any support for these initiatives.

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