

A Case Study on the Training initiative of State Street Syntel Services Pvt. Ltd. for the Growth and Development of KPO employees

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Abstract: *Syntel is a company that is a merger between IT and KPO. Being a Global company the customers are spread all over the world. English Language Proficiency has become one of the most critical factors to succeed in a global operating model. Therefore constant feedbacks are taken from customers to have better customer satisfaction. After feedback was taken from customers it was found that the employees were not very proficient in English along with complaints regarding their language proficiency. Therefore after a sampling done by taking a some employees into consideration, it was decided that a test would be taken that would gauge the knowledge level of the employees and a The Language Assessment Tool (LAT) was developed to test the same. The LAT was developed to bring about a culture change in a global Organisation like Syntel, which would enhance customer satisfaction. The LAT consists of a series of test developed on Articles, Prepositions, Vocabulary, Tenses and Reading. Around 5200 employees of Syntel are slated to take the test and their proficiency in basic grammar will be assessed.*

I. INTRODUCTION:

State Street Syntel Services Pvt. Ltd. which is the financial services KPO of Syntel, Inc was established in India in the year 2004. It is a leading global provider of integrated information technology and Knowledge Process Outsourcing (KPO) solutions spanning the entire lifecycle of business and information systems and processes. The company has four delivery centers in India of which two are located at Mumbai and two in Pune. Major Services Offered include Equity Research, Financial Analysis, Fixed, Income Research, Market Research & Analysis, Fund Accounting, Investment, Accounting, Trade Processing. It offers its services to clients in Asian countries, Europe, Canada and Oceania.

With dedicated Centers of Excellence, a flexible Global Delivery Model, and a strong track record of building collaborative client partnerships to create sustainable business advantage for Global 2000 organizations the company is growing.

As per the Reports for the third quarter 2013, **Q3** revenue of \$209.9M, up 13% from year-ago quarter, and 4% sequentially. Q3 EPS of \$1.42 per diluted share, up 15% from year-ago quarter, and 25% sequentially. Q3 cash & short term investments of \$579M and Global Headcount of 22,936 on September 30, 2013, up 14% from year-ago quarter.

The mission of Syntel is as they mention, "We create new opportunities for clients by harnessing the passion, talent and innovation of Syntel employees worldwide". In order to have the competitive edge the company is having the right people, processes, and technologies. With their foundation as an IT organization, with extensive experience in software development and processes, they can quickly automate and digitize customer's processes. For instance, they develop online tools to help reduce manual labor, which helps increase productivity and improve quality.

Training and Development Team: Integrating IT with KPO delivers significant value, including faster testing cycles, shorter feedback periods, condensed enhancement cycles, Single platform cycle management and Reduced costs. Syntel's end-to-end KPO solutions for financial services, healthcare/life sciences, and insurance include Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment Tool - Identeon - to determine what can determine what can be outsourced and the ideal delivery mode, Six Sigma based transition and change management methodology, including diligence, transition plan, knowledge transfer, ramp up and ongoing change management, Domain focused teams with hands on experience in your industries processes, Delivery framework with sample SLAs (accuracy, adherence to deadlines, response time, etc.), Baseline project plan,

Metrics highlighting significant cost savings from year one, Year-over-year productivity savings guarantees, Disaster recovery and business continuity plans to address disasters that occur at the global level, Continuous feedback loop to ensure upgraded performance into the long term, World-class project management, Safety and security of working with a U.S.-based company – projects are managed. To handle all these works in BPO sector, a company must have competent people particularly if it is in the BPO/ KPO sector, as front office employees play a major role who communicate with the clients and provide value added service. Therefore training and development department plays a lot of initiative and innovative strategies in the area of skill development to bring success in delivering solutions. The HR team offers ample training programs (both in-room and online). Vision of training team is “To enhance Syntel’s productivity, growth and customer satisfaction by nurturing, re-skilling and effectively leveraging its Human Talent”. The training team at Syntel takes care of soft skills training and process training. The soft skills department takes care of all the language driven needs of the employees. They include Accent neutralization, Business Communication, Cross culture training, Email Etiquette, English grammar, Telephone Etiquette to name a few. It also takes care of skill driven needs like presentation skills, time management, MS Office: Excel Macros, MS Office: Excel advanced, word and power point. Soft skills is an important area relating to a person's Emotional Intelligence Quotient, which are a cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness and optimism that characterize relationships with other people. Hence, the training team at Syntel prepares a holistic training program for its employees after thorough Evaluation and Analysis.

Challenge faced:

In order to provide the best possible services to them the training team takes constant feedbacks from customers, clients. From the data collected based on feedback, it was found that customers had various suggestions and complaints. There were major Escalations in customer complaints regarding communication problems of the employees. In Email Escalations, it was observed that appropriate language was not used. Also there were errors in sentence construction. In-Voice over customer (VOC), feedbacks were taken from clients and customers and the data collected through this medium indicated the need for improvement in communication skills was felt.

Strategies taken:

Keeping all the above points in mind Syntel created Language Enhancement Academy under training department towards an appropriate need analysis. Initially it was decided to assess 150 employees to gauge the current level of employees in English proficiency.

Language Enhancement Academy:

One of the most important initiatives of the Language Enhancement Academy is the Language Assessment Platform (LAP). LAP is carried out every year under the Language Enhancement (LEA) to gauge the training requirements for the soft skills department in areas of English grammar. Assessments are conducted by means of a two minute free speech round where the employees are given a few topics and they have to speak on any one of those.

It was decided that all the employees falling under the category of Grades E0 to E3 will be assessed.

The following topics given to the Employees:

1. Should students have to wear school uniforms?
2. Should exams be removed from the curriculum?
3. Technology pros and cons
4. We are better off today than we were eight years ago
5. A toxic mind is more dangerous than pollution
6. Why good grooming is so important for a job interview
7. A job you would like to have

Guidelines for Assessment:

Assessment of each participant will be on the following parameters:

1. Sentence Construction
2. Articles
3. Singular / Plural
4. Prepositions
5. Tenses
6. Pronunciation

Parameters for Judgement:

Each of the above mentioned parameters are measured on a scale of 1 to 4.

- 4 – Very fluent with communication /negligible errors
- 3– Good fluency / approx. 2 to 3 errors
- 2 – Choppy fluency / obvious mistakes
- 1 – Very poor fluency / Consistent errors

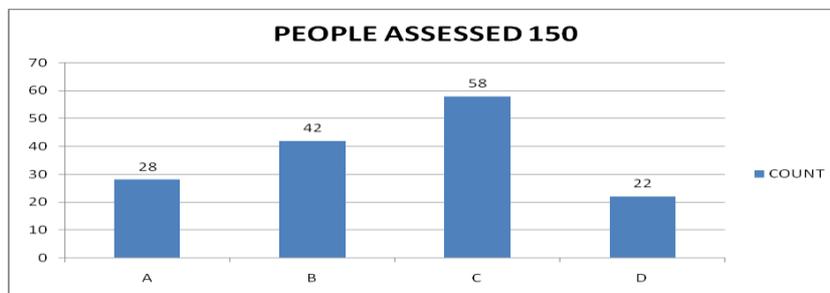
The Final grades will be as follows:

- A= 91%-100% Excellent – Need not undergo language training
- B= 81% to 90% Good – Needs to undergo 20hr Language Training
- C= 71% to 80% Needs Improvement – Needs to undergo 40hr Language Training
- D= 70% and below Poor – Needs to undergo 40hr Language Training

The Content for each of the Language Training modules are finalized post the LAP assessment.

Assessment of 150 People:

The analysis revealed that 100 people were falling in the B and C, which was not a positive indicator. It indicated that around 70% of the people were falling in this category, which was of concern .before starting LDI.



GRADES	COUNT	PARAMETERS
A	28	80+ (2Mistakes or less)
B	42	60-80 (4 Mistakes or less)
C	58	45-60 (6 and above)
D	22	0-45 (10 and above)

The objective was to improve this situation and to bring about an overall change in the organization. Based on these findings Language Development Index was developed.

The Birth of Language Development Index:

Based on analysis done by the Language Enhancement Academy (LEA) and the feedback received from customers, it was decided to start a colossal project called the “Language Development Index”. This initiative from the training team will help to assess, train and certify employees across various proficiency levels in English.

The Language Development Index Framework:

There are five categories of employees across which the project will be undertaken E0 to E5. E0 are the fresher's, E2 are senior associates, E3 are team leaders, E4 is deputy manager, E5 is the managerial position. This project will span across all KPO employees falling under the E0 to E5 categories. Test to be taken on Syntel University called "Syntelligence". Every employee would be provided with a User ID and Password from which they need to log on to the site to appear for the test. Test will be conducted across multiple locations viz. Powai, Andheri (SEEPZ) and Pune. A coordinator will be assigned at every location for conducting the test. Maximum of only 25 people at a time can appear for the test due to server limitations. Employees can view their results immediately after they appear for the test. An automated mail of the score card is sent to the employees after the test is done. Employees are eligible for two attempts in a span of three months in case an employee fails (below 50%). Only if an employee's clears Level one is eligible to appear for the next level that is the Intermediate certification. Training will be given to all employees who fail to reach the 50% mark. Approximately 10 hours of training in areas of Articles, Vocabulary, Tenses, Reading Comprehension, Preposition, Connectives and Conjunctions.

The Language Development Index is an ongoing project and is to be carried out in the following phases:

The first phase will be the online elementary certification program that will assess basic grammar and reading comprehension. The people targeted are all employees from processors to team leaders. It will cover all employees falling under the E0 to E3 categories. The second phase will be Intermediate level covering advance English grammar, Email etiquette and business writing and presentation. The people targeted are all employees falling under E3 to E5. The third phase is the advance certification stage covering all employees above the E5 category.

Roads ahead:

Syntel will reap various benefits from this project. LDI will serve as a benchmark for hiring and growth for KPO employees across various processes. It will also help Syntel to provide their customers a progressive operating and service environment. It can prove as a critical milestone in proving customers about enhancing effectiveness of the employees. It will also help to gauge training requirements, pertaining to language in order to identify appropriate training programs. Creating a certification program in language –to assess and validate the English communication skills of the KPO employees will give employees a competitive edge. The overall learning curve of the employees at Syntel will be enhanced thus promoting a learning environment.

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