

Who Says Elephants Can't Dance? Uttar Pradesh Women Power Line 1090

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Abstract

Women Power Line 1090 was a facility set up by the government of Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state of India, for eradicating the menace of harassment of women in the state. The case briefly presents the genesis of the 1090 project and traces the journey of the project from an idea to the creation of an innovative and agile organization within the normally bureaucratic police force. The case concludes by presenting the challenges faced by the protagonist while analyzing the first seven months performance of his brainchild. The first challenge discussed is how he can extend 1090 to address more severe problems of eve-teasing, domestic violence and cyber crimes related to women. The second challenge he is thinking about is scaling up the operations without losing quality. The third challenge he is looking at is to find ways to create awareness and mobilization in the rural areas, which are home to 77 per cent of the state's population.

Keywords

Public organization, innovation, public service delivery, strategy implementation, strategic alignment, seven 'S' framework

Introduction

Navniet Sekera, deputy inspector general (DIG) of Uttar Pradesh (UP) police—the man behind Women Power Line 1090—was a happy man as he was looking at the progress report of his unique initiative.

Disclaimer: This case was prepared by Dr Neeraj Dwivedi, Faculty, Indian Institute of Management Lucknow and Nishant Saxena, CEO, Elements Academia. This is intended to be used solely as a basis for class discussion, rather than to illustrate effective or ineffective handling of an administrative or business situation. The case is based on factual information; however, some data and names of persons in the case have been disguised to protect the competitive situation of the company.

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The first seven months' data showed that more than 76,000 victims of 'harassment on phone' had come forward to register their complaints, and in 96 per cent of cases the complaint was resolved within 24–48 hours. This contrasted with the 3 per cent resolution rate through the usual police station/court route in India. India's youth icon Aamir Khan had personally visited the 1090 office and congratulated everyone involved. He had also invited the team on one of India's most-watched shows, *Satyamev Jayate*. Besides, the chief minister (CM) of UP had also decided to showcase 1090 as one of the top five achievements of his government.

The Genesis of Women Power Line

It all began few months ago, when a teary-eyed but aggressive girl barged into DIG Navniet Sekera's office. She was a sincere, hard-working student but was facing continuous sexual harassment on phone. When she complained to her father, he instead snatched her phone and stopped all her studies! Her father was a peon in a local college and did not want to take up a fight. Meanwhile, the aggressor had grown even more confident, and had started to stalk her till right near her home. She had come to the DIG pleading for justice.

With 20 years in Indian Police Service, Navniet knew fully well the sad state of justice delivery system in India. The procedures demanded that this girl go to the local police station and register a formal complaint. That alone was a herculean task for any girl, especially with all the negativity and corruption associated with police stations and local constabulary. The police themselves were overburdened, and the cases of eve-teasing were treated as minor crimes and given low priority. Even if the local thana¹ in-charge agreed to file a criminal complaint (which would be rare), the court dates will take many years. By this time, the girl will get married, and probably also face social stigma for coming out in the open. And in any case, the resolution rate in Indian courts was hardly 3 per cent.

This was a lose–lose game, both for the girl and for the society. As a result, thousands of women kept suffering silently across the state.

The Idea

Navniet was thinking hard of a pragmatic idea that could alleviate this suffering while being practical to implement. There were real-life challenges and constraints, and a simple emotional appeal to curb sexual harassment would not do. Navniet, with his IIT/ISB² education, had learnt that big problems required innovative solutions. He thought this problem as an opportunity to test this hypothesis. He was thinking of how he could make justice fast, cheap and accessible.

Meanwhile, the state had a new CM, young and eager to bring about a change. He had repeatedly heard public requests to do something about the growing menace of women harassment. He asked senior police officers, 'What can we realistically do about this menace?' The CM's push provided the much-needed political resolve and DIG Sekera formally proposed the 1090 idea.

1090: Justice Fast, Justice Cheap, Justice Accessible

Overall, the focus of 1090 was on preventing offence versus seeking a legal conviction (which may be long-winded and take many years). One main concern was that the victim should be able to call one short

number from any phone and any operator, across the state, so that there was no need to remember long numbers and codes. Moreover, it was important that the complainant felt safe and secure while calling the number. On discussion, within the team, it was evolved that invariably the call should be picked up by a woman police officer. Further concerns were that the victim's identity should remain undisclosed throughout the whole process of redressal of the complaint. At the end, it was decided that the whole concept should be developed around the following five principles that Navniet called Panchatatva³:

1. One state, one number
2. Woman police officer to receive call
3. Victim's identity will not be disclosed
4. Victim will not be called to any police station
5. 1090 team will remain in touch till the problem is resolved

Implementing the Idea—From Drawing Board to Nitty-gritty

One telephone number—1090—was advertised across the state. Any victim of sexual harassment on phone could call up this number (the total charge was 50 paise⁴ for the call) and register her complaint. She need not go to any police station or court. The victim's identity would also not be disclosed. The 1090 team understood the serious social barriers at play and wanted to ensure resolution within these constraints.

Just the telephone line and number proved to be a headache. The premises of Power Line had no telephone cables in the radius of 3–4 km. So, to get an underground line took a lot of time and persuasion from the Department of Telecom. The Power Line team spoke to senior officers in government telecom company and got a 2-km underground cable and an 1-km overhead cable of 20 pair facility. One incoming primary rate interface line (PRI) and one outgoing PRI and two lines each of 8 mbps and 4 mbps for broadband were sourced. Normally, this process takes many months due to tendering process but relationships at highest levels were used to speed up the process. After one month, the power line got itself a dedicated lease line (this was achieved at a 50 per cent discount). The entire system was based on voice over Internet protocol (VOIP).

For the first time in India, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL; state-run telecom player) provided tampered caller-line identification (CLI) for the unique number 1090 that would work across all telecom providers. 1090 was a small and easy to remember number for the rural and less-educated women across the state. The permission for 1090 was specially granted by the Department of Telecom, Government of India after Navniet personally spoke to the telecom minister Kapil Sibal. In ordinary process, this process itself might have taken many months.

The Process Flow

Once the basic infrastructure was in place, Navniet focused his attention on the process to be put in place to operationalize the whole system. The process was so designed that there was a clear demarcation between the section (consisting of all lady officers) receiving and interacting with the victim and the section (consisting of all male officers) interacting and counselling the harasser. However, it was important that the data be transferred between the two sections seamlessly, without the victims' identity going beyond the first section. See Figure 1(a) and (b) for a detailed schematic of the process flow.

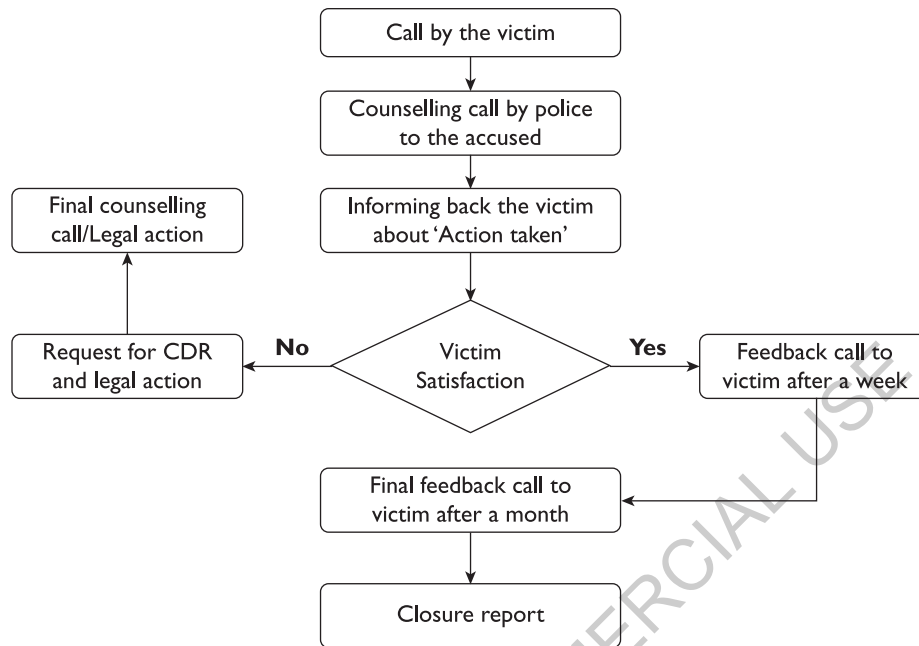


Figure 1(a). The Process Flow Diagram of 1090

Source: Uttar Pradesh Police (Lucknow).

A lady police officer received the call from victim and took down the mobile number from which indecent calls were made to the victim. This data was transferred to the male constables' section. The male constable immediately called up the offender. The constable would mention that he was calling from UP police's 1090 Women Power Line, and tried to counsel the offender to refrain from his activities. Finally, he would warn the offender that if he made repeat calls, he will be summoned to the police station, treated like an ordinary criminal, and he will never get a character certificate in life. Intent was to tell the offender in a polite yet firm manner—the consequences of his action—if the full force of law were to be unleashed. The offender can see on his mobile that he has indeed received a call from 1090 which has been widely advertised as belonging to police force.

There was a third section comprising of only woman police officers, where rigorous follow-ups of the victim were made. The first after 24 hours, then after seven days and finally after another 30 days. The total cycle was therefore 38 days. The lady constable who called would politely ask if the problem was resolved. If the problem was resolved, the case would be marked closed. But if not, it will go back to the same cycle above.

In most cases, the offender would deny, apologize or rationalize. Either way, after the stern warning, almost everyone stopped making any more indecent calls. They were categorically told that any more calls from their number or any number registered against their name would invite strict retribution. Ninety-six per cent calls got resolved just after the first 'counselling' was made by the police officer to the offender. According to Raghvendra Singh, in-charge of the cell:

This counselling has to be done sensitively. Most offenders are not serious criminals (Eighty percent had a prior relationship with the girl that went awry). So the male constables have to behave like an elder brother and gently

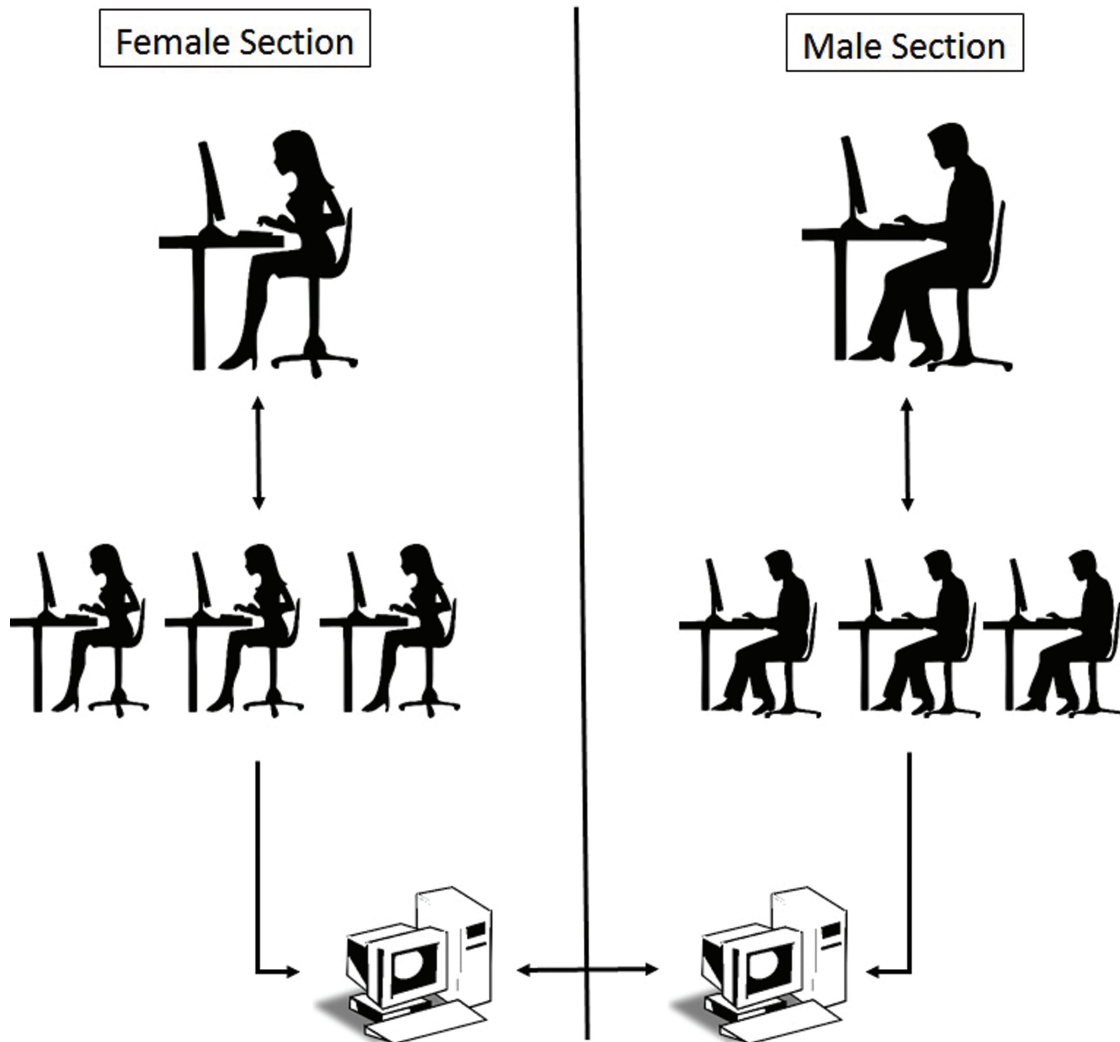


Figure 1(b). The Process Flow Diagram of 1090 (Schematic)

Source: Uttar Pradesh Police (Lucknow).

put family and social pressure on the offender. Only when the offender refuses to listen, we need to get strict. Recall how ragging was rampant in India before, and its resolution happened through not just strict policies but also a social movement against ragging. 1090 is a mission against harassment, and we are trying to change the mindset and attitude of youth, often involving the family and friends of the offender too.

A strong information technology (IT) backbone ensured 1090 team had access to entire call logs and system-generated reminders and follow-ups. In the few cases where the offender did not listen and mend his ways, the 1090 team would obtain the call log of the offender from the telecom provider and find out which were his most dialled numbers. They would then call up these numbers (typically, they would be

numbers of his boss, parents, relatives or spouse) and explain the situation. In some cases, these relatives of the offender and the offender were taken together in a conference. This social pressure forced most offenders to stop making any further calls.

In the very few extreme cases, where the offenders were hardened, local police was called in to help. But even then, 1090 kept following up till full resolution. 1090 registered complains in its own name, so the victim's identity could be kept confidential, and the victim need not go to the police station. According to Raghavendra Singh, in those few cases, where the complaint is converted to a police case, the use of IT infrastructure and the fact that all calls made from the cell comes handy. The recorded statements help the police present a strong case in the court. According to him:

Since everything is being recorded, when an arrest is made, a strong evidence-based case is built-in. Also, once booked, the offender will not be able to get verification for selection in government jobs, for issuing of passports or even simple things like procuring a driving licence.

Human Recourse and Culture Building

Shachi Ghildiyal, superintendent of police (SP), Intelligence, UP police was delegated the responsibility to hire appropriate constables for the 1090. She was well aware that she needed to ensure that personnel recruited for the job have a totally fresh perspective so that the efforts to change the mindset and build a customer-centric culture would be easy. The constables hired were fresh college pass outs who had very little exposure to the functioning of the police department. Teaching them was not a problem; they went through a rigorous software and soft skills training before taking up their responsibilities. The constables were trained on communication and counselling skills, to listen with empathy and care. The lady constables were specially trained to behave as an elder sister of the victim, whom the victim could confide and trust. The team of lady constables was carefully chosen to include those who had themselves suffered from sexual harassment in the past and thus could relate better with the victim.

Since most police constables hailed from rural background, it took about three months to train them on effective communication skills, computer operations, mannerisms, etc. These constables went through a rigorous training with a private grooming agency, something generally unheard of in the police force.

Attempts were made to create a customer-centric culture. The tele-callers were asked to keep customer service above everything else. Traditionally, the police culture was so that the senior officers expected that their subordinates would stand up when they visit. However, this 'rule' was set aside for 1090 employees where even if senior officers were coming, the constables continued to sit and attend to the customers. Further, a new, smart corporate-style dress code was implemented—the first time that police officers were not adorning the traditional khaki uniform. Fun games were organized and a lot of family-type culture was built in. All these interventions made the women power line a more approachable and pleasant place where the victim would not feel intimidated to visit.

Raghvendra Singh was entrusted the job of managing the Women Power Line. He had experience in a well-known private sector firm before joining the police force and also had significant experience managing the main police call centre (100). This was a well-thought-out strategy as he had the customer-centric approach, which Navniet wanted to build, as well as had the technical experience of managing a police call centre.

The girls found working in the power line much more conducive. Their superiors promoted further study among these girls. Most of the girls worked in a six-hour shift and got enough time to study, attend

coaching and prepare for competitive examinations which would not have been possible had they been posted in a police station.

Building the right culture was very central to the whole concept of 1090 and most of the constables working in the power line understood that well. According to Satyaveer Sachan, a constable working in the male section of 1090:

The kind of work environment we are getting here is very different from the thanas which were shabby and non-conducive for girls. We have got a state of the art infrastructure, wide exposure to technology and world class training.

Publicity and Awareness


The concept was well designed, but the success of the concept required that women in the state became aware that such a thing existed and to convince them that it was really going to address the problems they were encountering. Navniet was well aware of this fact and hence right from the beginning had worked out an elaborate publicity plan. A full cover-page advertisement appeared in all the leading dailies on the day of launch of the helpline. Media was engaged in the awareness campaign through heavy public relations (PR). All opportunities were leveraged that could provide press coverage and let the message reach out to the masses. With an eye on cultural change and empowerment of women, the name was changed from 'Women Help Line' to 'Women Power Line'. The 1090 poster showed a smiling girl with a happy face (most other helplines showed a troubled victim). See Figure 2 for one of the initial billboards and newspaper ads released. The idea was to empower, where girls start retaliating at the offender that they will complain to 1090 and the offender knows the high-resolution rate there.

To save costs and increase reach, an innovative public-private partnership model was used. In 43 districts, Idea Cellular (one of the leading telecom players) was permitted to put up standard 1090 hoardings at their own cost for just putting a logo of the company. Similarly, leading frequency modulation (FM) radio stations like Radio Mirchi started advertising 1090 at their own cost. Everyone wanted to be associated with a winning project that was positively impacting the lives of so many girls.

Social media was also leveraged with banners on Facebook and other sites (see Figure 3). Physical visits were organized to colleges to create awareness. Some colleges themselves voluntarily put-up notices informing their students about the Women Power Line after these visits (see in Figure 4 one such notice put up by a college). Special communication and presentation skills training was done for the constables to present 1090 effectively in these colleges.

Initial Progress and Results

Overall results were outstanding (refer Figure 5 for the first seven-month performance data). More than 76,000 victims came forward in just seven months, and after the full feedback cycle of 38 days (where the victim was asked thrice if she had indeed stopped receiving indecent calls), 88 per cent cases were fully closed (majority of others had still not completed the mandatory 38 days). Only 52 first information reports (FIRs) were registered, and 96 per cent resolutions happened within the first counselling itself (even so, they remained in the system for second and third feedbacks, to make sure the indecent calls had not started again).




Harassed
by Lewd/Objectionable/
Obscene Phone Calls
& SMS or MMS...?

Now don't bear this silently...

Call 1090
Women Power Line

Power Line for women by U.P. Police

- Your identity will be kept confidential.
- You will never be called to any police station or any other office.
- Female Police Officers will attend your call.
- We shall remain in contact with you till the problem is completely resolved.
- One State One Number - 1090


"Safety of women is our top priority."
Shri Akhlesh Yadav
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh

Helpline Numbers
100- Police Emergency
101- Fire Station
108- Ambulance Service

Figure 2. The Advertisement Released on the Launching Day of 1090

Source: Uttar Pradesh Police (Lucknow).



Figure 3. A banner from the Facebook Page of 1090 Women Powerline

Source: Uttar Pradesh Police (Lucknow).

The Women Power Line staff had a few stories to tell: Anjali (name changed) was a typical satisfied victim. She worked in a real estate company and had her CUG number floated on the net. Her number was lifted by a troublesome caller who started harassing her on phone for more than 10 days until she made a complaint to 1090. From the very next day, she stopped getting the calls.

Another middle-aged class-IV worker at a Lucknow-based hospital was being harassed by an anonymous man. He was repeatedly calling the woman and sending lewd messages. Unfortunately, when the lady's husband got a feeler, he started suspecting his own wife. However, once she made a complaint to 1090, she stopped getting any more calls.

In both these cases, within few minutes of their call being received, the male constables had called up the offender and did a 'counselling'. And the offender stopped making any more calls.

Not only the victims but even the project team felt elated about 1090. According to Shivani Singh, a lady constable:

I am very happy being a part of the Powerline as we can make a considerable difference in the lives of the victims. Earlier in thanas, because of the bureaucracy and red-tape, we were not being able to justify our roles. But, here at powerline, we are actually solving cases on a phone call. It feels nice to hear all the praises when we help so many unknown ladies all across the state. They call back to say how thankful they are, and how we are like their mentors.



NANANKCHAND ANGLO SANSKRIT COLLEGE, MEERUT
(Affiliated to C.C.S. University, Meerut)

Ref. No.....

Date: 19-1-2013

NOTICE

Students are hereby informed that **Uttar Pradesh Police has established a call centre WOMEN POWER LINE 1090 to give relief to female students/women from unwanted and obscene phone calls.** This service will keep a watch on instances of unwanted phone calls, obscene or derogatory remarks against female students/women and will take concrete steps to prevent such instances. Female students/women can directly register their complaints by dialling 1090. Salient features of this service are:

- The complainant/victim's identity will be kept confidential.
- The victim will never be called to a police station or any other police office.
- Call will necessarily be picked up by women police officers.
- Call centre shall remain in contact with the victim till the problem is resolved.
- The Number 1090 is valid for the whole state.

Male students are also hereby informed that if a complaint is found to have been registered against them in the call centre, they will be liable to penal action. This might be detrimental to their future academic career and may lead to following difficulties:

- Refusal of grant of character certificate
- Police verification will not be possible
- Difficulties in obtaining driving license
- Difficulties in getting Passport

This is notified for the information of all students.

PRINCIPAL

Figure 4. A Notice Informing Students of the 1090 Powerline Displayed at a College in Meerut (Translated from Local Language)

Source: Uttar Pradesh Police (Lucknow).

The Way Ahead

While Navniet was satisfied with all the wonderful results and appreciations, he also knew that the dream they had seen still had a long way to go. The first phase of the project had focussed only on indecent calls received by women. While this might have been the right low-hanging fruit to start the campaign against sexual harassment, women faced multiple other forms of harassments too. Online/internet/email was one. Domestic violence was another. Finally, the biggest challenge was physical eve-teasing, which could happen near colleges, near malls or just on the way. But, the identity of the aggressor was more difficult to ascertain in some of these cases. How should 1090 take up these challenges, and where should its role end versus the usual police helpline (100)?

Period: 15/11/ 2012 to 15/6/2013 (first 7 months)**(A) Call Break-up**

Total matured call (above 30 sec)	= 215,686
i. Regarding Information/Congratulations etc.	= 139,028
ii. Total complaints	= 85,634
iii. Registered complaints (remaining were out of scope)	= 76,658

(B) Type of Complaints

Out of the total 85,634 complains,

i. Harassment on phone (registered)	= 76,658
ii. Harassment on Internet (unregistered, out of scope of Phase I)	= 1,536
iii. Physical stalking (unregistered, out of scope of Phase I)	= 1,980
iv. Domestic violence (unregistered, out of scope of Phase I)	= 5,460

**While ii-iv were out of scope and hence not formally registered, some help was still provided on these complaints and a total of 147 FIRs were registered. But focus was on Phase I complaints (indecent calls). Phase II of the project would include these as well.*

(C) Complaint resolution

Total relevant complaints for Phase I	= 76,658
# of complaints where the first feedback from victim was satisfactory	= 73,676
Total solved cases and victim fully satisfied (in full 38 days cycle)	= 67,604

**The first feedback from victim was taken within 24–48 hours of the complaint, but after the counselling was done by the male section.*

(D) Professional background of callers

Working	= 10,289
Non working	= 27,493
Students	= 38,876

(E) Age-wise split of callers

Age Group (Years)	0–15	15–20	20–25	25–30	30–40	40–50	50+
Number of Callers	729	22,747	26,358	11,237	10,482	3,908	1,195

(F) Rural-Urban split

Total registered complains	= 76,658
From urban areas	= 54,987
From rural areas	= 21,671

Figure 5. Data on Uttar Pradesh Women Power Line (1090)

Source: Based on data from Uttar Pradesh Police (Lucknow).

The second obvious challenge was scaling up without losing quality. While 76,000 complaints in seven months was a huge success, the total population of women in UP within the 15–40 age group was 45 million. And all social indicators pointed to the fact that most of them were subjected to some or the other form of eve-teasing sometime in their lives. How do we empower women at this scale? Navniet knew that his current 100-seater operations need to be scaled up rapidly and significantly, but he was worried if his resolution rates will continue to remain high even when he had, say, 5,000, tele-callers. He knew top private companies in India like Genpact and Infosys were running back-office operations with more than 50,000 tele-callers, and he had to learn from them how they scaled up without sacrificing quality.

The third challenge was awareness and mobilization in the rural areas. Seventy-seven per cent of UP's population lived in rural areas, but analysis of calls (refer annexure) suggested that more than 70 per cent of callers were from urban India. How should he go about changing the mindset of rural victims—who had deep-rooted social barriers against registering a complaint and were also far less independent compared to their urban counterparts? True social change would happen when women in villages also started confidently reaching out to 1090 every time someone harassed them. Navniet was wondering what he would have to do differently in the days to come to address these challenges.

Acknowledgement

The authors express their profuse thanks to DIG of Police, Lucknow-Range, UP, India for the consent for this case study to be published in journals, conference proceedings, and books.

Notes

1. The commonly used Hindi word for a police station in India.
2. Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian School of Business (ISB) are among the most reputed educational institutions in India in the field of Engineering and Management respectively.
3. Panchatatva—Sanskrit word for five elements.
4. One Indian rupee = 100 paisa, one USD = approximately ₹61 as in April 2014.