



The Robin Hood Army

“The Robin Hood Army is not a structured NGO or a large civic movement. It is a platform of regular people that want to help, and think less and do more.”

— Neel Ghose, Robin Hood Army founder

Neel Ghose (HBS MBA 2019) could not be prouder of his team. By November of 2018, only four years after its inception, the Robin Hood Army (RHA) had served over 9 million meals to less fortunate people in 103 cities across four continents, and helped more than 750 children living on the streets of India enroll into public schools. All without raising a single rupee. The RHA operated exclusively through volunteers who abided by the “golden rule” of not accepting or soliciting monetary donations.

The rapid global expansion and the diversification of the activities included in the mission of the organization had brought about new challenges, especially in terms of coordination and support. Ghose wondered if the time had come to establish a more formal management structure, with dedicated people working for the organization full time. Introducing full-time positions, however, would require funding, and Ghose worried about the implications of this move on the operating model and on the culture of the organization.

Birth and Expansion of the Robin Hood Army

One clear evening in August of 2014, Ghose, his longtime friend and colleague Anand Sinha, and three of their friends met to distribute food they had collected from local restaurants to people living under the Hauz Khas flyover in South Delhi. Ghose was in town on business recruiting restaurants for Zomato, a restaurant discovery and food delivery startup where he was working at the time. Through his work, he had recently learned about Re-Food, a Portuguese organization where volunteers collected excess food from local restaurants, grocery stores, school canteens, and other food sources to redistribute it to community members in need.¹ Leveraging on Ghose’s and Sinha’s contacts with local restaurants, the small group of friends set themselves up to recreate that experience in their hometown.

They were encouraged by the generosity of the local restaurants, which that night donated enough food to serve about 150 meals. However, they were shocked to realize that the number of people in need of a meal was at least ten times the number of meals they could serve. Ghose recalled, “These were our neighbors. We had no idea of the sheer scale of hunger and neglect that existed just 10 minutes away from our homes.” The group decided to repeat the experience the following week. “We were not

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thinking about growing an organization, but more about doing something good for the community with a few friends. We started sharing our experience on social media, and more of our friends wanted to join,” stated Ghose. Inspired by the English legend of Robin Hood, a champion of the common people

fighting against injustice² who took from the rich to give the poor, they decided to call themselves the Robin Hood Army. Before the end of the year, over 200 people in 8 cities in India, including Mumbai, Hyderabad, and Bangalore, were collecting excess food and delivering it to the less fortunate members of their community.

Ghose stated, “We quickly realized that, while serving a few meals once a week would be good for our conscience, if we wanted to make a real difference we needed to scale disruptively.” Some Robins – how members of the RHA defined themselves – demonstrated particular dedication and initiative and assumed prominent roles in the organization. Among them were Aarushi Batra and Sanchit Jain, whose contribution became critical for the growth of the RHA. Batra, who had just finished her masters in management at the London School of Economics and was getting ready to join her family business, volunteered to coordinate the communication aspects of their strategy. Jain, a computer engineer working on his own start-up, led the expansion team.

Batra recalled “Platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram allowed us to get in contact with people we would have never imagined.”³ Social media made the RHA and its initiatives visible to food sources, such as restaurants, and facilitated recruiting of prospective Robins. “Above and beyond our direct friends, we received inquiries from people in Pakistan, Singapore, the Philippines, Egypt, Europe, and the US”, said Batra, “People were eager to help”. In February of 2015, a RHA chapter commenced operations in Karachi, Pakistan. “Hunger goes beyond borders and political ideologies”, stated Ghose. Batra added “India and Pakistan are so similar. We are the same people who want to give back to our communities, which have similar issues – like widespread inequalities and hunger.” In August of 2016, on Independence Day, the Indian and Pakistani organizations partnered with several startups, including Uber and Zomato, and some Bollywood personalities to serve over 500,000 meals to people in need on either side of the India-Pakistani border.⁴

The goals the leadership team had set for themselves for 2018 were to expand their global presence to 100 cities and serve 600,000 hungry individuals each month. By November of 2018, the RHA had exceeded its expansion goal and operated in 103 cities across twelve countries (see **Exhibit 1** and **Exhibit 2**) and was serving 500,000 meals per month.

A Hyper-Local Model to Solve a Global Problem

The number of chronically malnourished people in the world is on the rise. Hunger kills more people than AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis combined. The “State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World” report issued in 2017 by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) indicated that 815 million people (about 11% of the global population) were chronically malnourished in 2016, wasting threatened the lives of 52 million children, 165,000 children under 5 years of age were stunted, and 33% of women of reproductive age suffered from anemia.⁵ At the same time, 33% of the food that was prepared daily in the world ended up wasted or lost. In India, that number raised to 40%.

“Hunger is not a problem driven by lack of food, but by lack of access. Ending hunger globally is possible, and it does not necessarily require the intervention of organizations like the United Nations. Logistics can get a long way”, stated Ghose. Reinforcing the message, Jain stated, “Food is one of the most basic needs of human beings. If we can’t provide it for everyone, then we fail as a society. The Robin Hood Army is a simple idea: we want to use food as a medium to bring out the best of humanity.”⁶ To deliver on this commitment, the RHA operating model was hyper-local. “The idea is to take responsibility for our communities and neighbors”, said Ghose, “So decentralization is a key ingredient of how we operate”.

Chapters and Cities

All members of the RHA were volunteers. The RHA did not have full-time employees, and held no assets, had no monetary funds, and did not rent or own office space. The lowest level operating unit was the chapter. A chapter consisted of a group of Robins that lived in the same area of a certain city and committed to taking care of the less fortunate people living in the same area (**Exhibit 3**). Each chapter operated as a mini start-up, with ample autonomy and complete accountability for their

results.⁷ New chapters benefited from best practices developed by more established chapters and general guidance shared through the communication channels of the RHA (see **Exhibit 4** for examples). City-level groups (“cities”) oversaw the operations of local chapters. For example, Mumbai comprised of eighteen neighborhood-based local chapters. Robins affiliated with the Bandra neighborhood chapter collected food from Bandra restaurants and served homeless people, orphanages, senior citizens homes, and hospitals around Bandra. A central team - the “Boiler Room” - helped coordinate across countries and defined the macro-level strategy of the RHA. Members of the Boiler Room included founders Ghose and Sinha, Batra (who had been “promoted” to co-founder status based on her significant contribution to the management of the organization), the expansion team led by Jain, the central social media team led by Batra, and the heads of all cities.

Local chapters included on average twenty to forty people, although there was some variation in the size of the groups. The guideline was to create a new chapter once the size of an existing one grew beyond 20 people. That way, a different nearby area could be served, or the same area could be served more than once per week without increasing the Robins’ time commitment. Local chapter’s leadership comprised of a team of four people, responsible, respectively, for general operations, volunteer management, social media and partnerships, and restaurant onboarding. Each chapter was responsible for scouting their area of responsibility, which was generally limited to a 2-kilometer radius, to assess the need for food and other necessities, and to ensure a sustainable source of food by engaging with local providers. Food sources included local restaurants, cafeterias, grocery stores but also private families. “In certain cities, where there is a strong apartment culture, each family in the apartment complex will prepare one extra meal to donate to the RHA. We call them our food bank. In some cases the homemakers even coordinate on who will cook what,” described Ghose. Partner restaurants were generally very welcoming toward the RHA and believed in its integrity. One restaurateur said, “They are all young, they all have jobs, it’s not like working with an NGO. This made it very real for me, and I wanted to help.”⁸ While most restaurants made their excess food available to the RHA, some even prepared fresh food specifically for the donation. As a way to give back, Robins were encouraged to choose partner restaurants in the occasion of personal celebrations such as birthdays or anniversaries. From time to time, they invited the restaurant owners to participate in a food drive, during which they would be identified as the source of the food and thanked directly by the beneficiaries of their donations.

Once the demand was assessed and the sources of food were secured, each chapter organized weekly food drives. Each member of the chapter was responsible for collecting food from specific providers. The group then met at a designated location (i.e. someone’s house or yard) to assemble individual meals for distribution. The food had to be served within six hours from collection. Next, the group headed out together to the area where they served the meals. “Robins are not in the business of delivering food, we are in the business of delivering smiles,” said Jain, “Spending time with the people we serve is the most important and rewarding aspect of the drive.”⁹ (**Exhibit 5**) Robins were encouraged to engage with the people they serve (which they called “citizens”) in every positive way they could. “For some of these people, Robins will be the only opportunity of human contact they will have all week,” said Ghose, “We talk to them, make them laugh, sing, dance, whatever will help put a smile on their faces.” Robins were also encouraged to take pictures and videos with the citizens, but never without permission and never capturing suffering. At the end of the drive, members of the local chapters met again at their designated location to share their experiences, and to celebrate with a quick meal or a coffee together, during which arrangements for the next week were made. Pictures and videos taken during the drive were then posted on the RHA social media pages, and each Robin was encouraged to share them on their personal social media accounts as well.

Social Media

Social media were a very important factor in the success of the RHA. Every aspect of the RHA operations was coordinated through WhatsApp (**Exhibit 6**). Batra recalled “It takes a second to connect with your friends on WhatsApp to decide what movie you are going to watch tonight, so we felt that this was a very efficient way of coordinating our activities as well.”¹⁰ Each layer of the organization had its dedicated WhatsApp group. Chapters coordinated logistics via group chats and communicated noteworthy news or information. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and the website were, instead, primary

means for recruiting, both prospective Robins and prospective partners and food sources. Batra worked hard to keep the RHA's social media presence fresh and to communicate the right message – the RHA was a global, accessible organization of regular people who aspired to do good in the world. Being a Robin was a way to be part of something bigger than oneself, where one could contribute to make a real difference. It was important to highlight how being involved with the RHA would be a fun experience doing simple activities in teams with a lot of freedom, and that the commitment would be compatible with the rest of one's life.

While the RHA received thousands of declarations of interest every month through their website and their social media platforms, expanding was not as easy. For example, Ghose had spent over a year trying to leverage colleges as a channel for the establishment of new RHA chapters. He recalled, "It didn't work. Students were excited at first, and some chapters started. But the model never became sustainable. The life of a student catches up with them. During exams, for example, people would not go out on their drives. We needed more consistency, so we abandoned that route." Differences in local culture, regulations, and social norms impacted the establishment of the RHA in new geographical areas and the development of new chapters. In 2018, the RHA was present in twelve countries. Of these, three were constantly growing, while the other nine were not showing the same trends, making Ghose and the leadership team think about ways they could "spark the fire" in those locations.

Volunteer Management

Robins were asked to donate three hours per week. People could sign up through the website or contact the RHA via Facebook. Turning a prospective Robin into an actual one was a priority for each chapter leader. The chapter member responsible for volunteer management worked to convert the initial contact into active participation. On their first drive, new Robins were welcomed by the rest of the group and introduced to the culture and mission of the organization. "It is critical to give a prospective Robin a powerful experience on their first drive," said Ghose. New Robins were immediately involved in front line activities, where they could experience first-hand the gratification coming from helping less fortunate people. They were also exposed to the idea that food was just a medium, and that the RHA was about a bigger mission – bringing out the best of humanity. Spending quality time with the citizens while having fun with them and their fellow Robins on their first drive was a very strong predictor of a successful conversion from prospective Robin to an actual one.

An even bigger motivator, however, was to give new Robins accountability. After a few drives, new Robins were asked to assume responsibility over some aspects of the organization, be it finding a new source of food, recruiting new volunteers, or organizing the logistics for the next drive. More experienced Robins were available to help as needed. Ghose clarified, "We want new Robins to become invested in the organization. Showing up for the drive is certainly appreciated, but our model hinges on the expectation that each volunteer will further the cause and promote our culture." He added, "This is also a way for us to identify high potential Robins who will become future leaders. Because we are 100% volunteer-based, we need to account for the fact that there will always be turnover within our ranks."

Organizational Culture

The culture at the RHA was heavily influenced by the start-up mentality. "We are not big on rules," said longtime Robin Suvarna Mandal, "Every city has its own culture, so we let each chapter figure out how they want to operate."¹¹ Ghose added, "We want to be nimble and respond to a variety of needs that we see in our communities. It is your city, your people. We like to think less and do more." The focus of any RHA activity was centered on a clear priority rule: Citizens First, Mission Next, Robins Last (see **Exhibit 7**). This culture led to several initiatives that had become integral part of the mission of the RHA.

New initiatives were generally started at the local level. If deemed successful and worth spreading, the central team and the initiating chapter developed a set of tools for the reproduction of the initiative at the global level. These tools included "how-to" documents and templates for communication and advertising. While chapters were encouraged to follow the suggestions generated on the basis of

previous experience, entrepreneurialism and flexibility were always encouraged, so each chapter was free to find their ways to accomplish their goals.

Campaigns and Special Drives

The Robins' entrepreneurialism manifested itself in a series of campaigns and special drives that went above and beyond the original mission to alleviate hunger in their communities (**Exhibit 8**). In October 2014, just a few months after inception, the RHA launched a campaign through Facebook inviting followers to gift food, clothes, toys, etc. to the less fortunate. Donors were invited to post a picture of the item they were donating with the hashtag #BeRobinthisDiwali on the RHA Facebook page. Two months later, a similar initiative labeled #BeRobinthisChristmas aimed to collect blankets and warm clothes across India, so that the Robins could distribute them during the cold winter months. In 2016, the RHA responded to an emergency situation in Latur, a rural area that suffered its worst drought in decades. Robins from the Pune chapter collected and delivered over 75,000 liters of water to the area using special train shipments every three days.

In July of the same year, the RHA introduced a new and ambitious program - the Robin Hood Academy. This initiative was a response to the many children that lived on the streets and did not have the opportunity to go to school. Some were required to work in order to contribute to the family income. Others lacked the support of their parents, who did not value education as an opportunity for their children to escape poverty. Other children simply did not have a family and lived in the community without their parents. In the spirit of "thinking less and doing more", a few Robins from the Indore and Powai chapters designed a curriculum focused on primary education and started holding classes for children on the weekend (**Exhibit 9**). This initiative quickly spread nation-wide. By November of 2018, the RHA was regularly teaching over 2,700 children across 30+ cities globally, and had "graduated" over 750 children, who had bridged their education gap and enrolled into full time public schools. The Robin Hood Academy has since become integral part of the vision of the RHA - "to become a global engine for hunger alleviation and education."¹²

A special drive planned for Independence Day (August 15) of 2016 aimed at serving 500,000 people on and around the border with Pakistan to raise awareness of hunger as a global problem that knows no borders. The initiative was carried out by the Indian and Pakistani RHA organizations. The initiative attracted the attention of several news outlets and media and was featured on national and local news and newspapers on both sides of the border. Inspired by their accomplishment, the RHA raised the bar for 2017 and set a goal to serve one million people across towns in India and Pakistan. The team exceeded the goal and ended up serving 1.32 million people across both countries on that day.

In 2018, the initiative was repeated, but this time the organization aimed at involving influencers from the media, businesses, and local policymakers (see **Exhibit 10**). This approach was inspired by "Kony 2012", a documentary produced by the Invisible Children charity organization and aired in 2012 to denounce the horrors perpetrated at the expense of children in Uganda by militia leader Joseph Kony. The documentary had been the fastest video to reach 100 million views within six days. The Invisible Children charity, in addition to leveraging social media attention, sought the endorsement of twenty "celebrity culture makers", including Angelina Jolie, Taylor Swift, Oprah Winfrey, George Clooney, and Ryan Seacrest, and twelve policy makers, including former US President George W. Bush, former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and former Secretary of State John Kerry. A media platform allowed viewers of the documentary to request the influencers and policy makers to intervene in order to correct the situation. The initiative resulted in a resolution by the U.S. Senate to back the efforts of countries in central Africa and help regional forces pursue leaders of the militia group.¹³ The RHA took a similar approach and involved in its #MissionMillion2018 twenty celebrities ("culturemakers") and eighteen policy makers and influencers ("changemakers"), with a goal of making hunger a national conversation. FilterCopy, the largest Indian company for viral video distribution, partnered with the RHA to create a video and an interactive technology platform to spread awareness on a national scale. The website received more than 300 hits/second, which caused it to crash within a few hours of going live. The video received 4.6 million views across Facebook and YouTube.

Learning from Previous Experiences

Ghose attributed some important aspects in the development of the RHA to his previous work experience at Zomato. The Delhi-based startup had scaled to a global tech unicorn and expanded into over 20 countries. “Working at Zomato was almost like being part of a championship team,” joked Ghose, “We worked insane hours, there was a big emphasis on performance, and we all felt extreme ownership of our mission. It was great!” Some of the distinctive traits that Ghose associated with the success of Zomato included a strong hands-on leadership style, by which top management was involved in day-to-day operations and wasn’t scared of “getting their hands dirty”. Entrepreneurship and accountability were a key part of the culture. “You would be thrown in the deep end not to see if you could swim, but to stretch your limits. If you needed help, it was there,” recalled Ghose, “Everybody was remote, but we felt very connected. We shared our wins real time using social media. We had leaderboards. And we were always encouraged to share our thoughts proactively. But most importantly, execution was as important – if not more – than planning.” These principles inspired many traits of the organizational culture at RHA.

Rules and Principles

The start-up mentality and the focus on entrepreneurialism left ample autonomy to each chapter. Ghose stated, “We only have three real rules that are non-negotiable. First, the RHA is a zero funds organization. That is, we do not, under any circumstance, solicit or accept monetary donations. Second, the RHA is apolitical. Third, the RHA includes all religions. Mandal added “And we never compromise on the quality of the food that we serve our citizens. Everything else is up to us.”¹⁴ The most important principle, however, was that no matter how many meals might be served, or how many children might be accepted by public schools, Robins were always 1% done. Jain stated, “We think that we are always 1% done. We don’t congratulate ourselves too much. We acknowledge, celebrate, and then - back to work.”¹⁵ Ghose added, “We strive to never become complacent, and to keep pushing our boundaries.”

Robins prided themselves of having accomplished so much in a relatively short period of time without raising a single rupee. Statements about the refusal of the RHA to accept monetary donations were prominently displayed on all official communication, including the RHA pages on social media. Prospective Robins were made aware of this rule by including it in the sign-up form (**Exhibit 11**). “This has kept a level of purity in the organization because we know that there is no other motive. People come to the RHA because they are passionate about the cause” said Robin Saloni Kapoor.¹⁶ Robins were allowed to accept only donations of items that could be distributed to the people in need. To stress the importance of operating without monetary resources, periodic summaries of the RHA accomplishments referred to each 12-month period as a “Non-Financial year” (**Exhibit 12**).

Ghose explained the power of the zero funds principle “Without money, Robins have a higher degree of ownership and feel like the organization is their own baby, not some NGO with its headquarters in Delhi. They become entrepreneurial, because they have very little resources.” Also, the zero fund principle gave the RHA significant reach with respect to partnerships even beyond restaurants and food outlets. For example, Viacom had created an anthem for the #Mission500K special drive in collaboration with Bollywood artists Farhan Akhtar and Vishal Dadlani. Selvel, a national billboard company, allowed the RHA to use their unsold inventory of billboards (see **Exhibit 13**). Radio stations and news agencies routinely donated their unsold space to the RHA to provide them with a channel of communication and visibility. The RHA was also periodically featured in the press as a new citizen driven model that was attracting 1,600+ members every month. “The pitch is ‘There is no money and this is our way of giving back to the community in our free time – are you on board?’” said Ghose.

In September of 2018, Ghose and Batra were featured in the popular TV show “Kaun Banega Crorepati” – the Indian version of “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire” scoring about 35 million viewers per episode at the time – where Ghose was a contestant paired up with Bollywood actress Kajol (**Exhibit 14**). “We won some money, but we donated it to another charitable organization that needed it to build a new kitchen.” That organization was Akshaya Patra, an Indian NGO dedicated to feeding midday meals to children.¹⁷ Ghose added, “We attended the show to increase awareness and visibility, not to earn money. It was a means to an end.” The coverage on the show led to 35,000 prospective Robins to sign up over the weekend.

A Community and a Family

Robins were encouraged to wear RHA t-shirts or at least green t-shirts during their weekly drives. Ghose explained, “This has two consequences: on the one hand, it increases visibility and further supports recruiting. On the other hand, it creates a sense of community between the Robins. By giving them a uniform we make them feel even more as part of a team.”

The sense of community went far beyond wearing green. “The RHA is a group of like-minded people from all walks of life (**Exhibit 15**). Many have found their best friends among fellow Robins, and in several cases even their life partners. We have had already five marriages between people that met within the RHA”, stated Ghose.

As in every family, however, tensions sometimes emerged between Robins. Ghose explained, “It is only normal that sometimes we might disagree on how we want to implement a certain initiative, or who is going to take responsibility for a project, or who will talk on the radio. Sometimes we [the leadership team] need to get involved to resolve a conflict. We always go back to our founding principle: Citizens First, Mission Next, Robins Last, which means that if you are suggesting a way that will serve more meals or put more kids through school, we will favor that over a different initiative, or over the pride of the Robin. We foster a culture of replaceability. People may not be with us forever, and some might be better suited for the job than we are. We need to make choices in the best interest of the mission.”

Managing Operations at the Robin Hood Army

Management at the RHA relied heavily on self-reported data, which was shared on social media and across all chapters, cities, and countries. The transparency of each city’s data on public platforms served both as a motivator and a control system. At the end of each week, Robins reported data on meals served, academy “graduates”, and volunteers through a series of spreadsheets shared online. Members of the Boiler Room had access to the “birds-eye view” dashboard (**Exhibit 16**), which provided a comprehensive picture of the performance of each city. Selected metrics captured the social media presence of each chapter, their compliance with meal count reporting, their volunteer management practices, and whether they had received official training with respect of the culture of the RHA. “We want to keep our metrics simple and clear”, explained Ghose.

Volunteer management was one of the more challenging aspects of the operations. The goal was to convert at least 75% of the requests to join the RHA into active volunteers taking part to food drives. A dedicated dashboard provided more details about the status of the volunteer funnel in each city (**Exhibit 17**). Each chapter was also responsible to track and report Robins’ attendance to weekly drives.

The members of the Boiler Room evaluated performance of each city using a combination of objective and subjective indicators. In addition to the dashboards described previously, Ghose assessed the level of energy in the WhatsApp chats and used it as a leading indicator of performance, “In my experience, chapters that showed greater energy in their chats were generally those that performed better.” Other monitored activities included the frequency and creativity of special drives, as well as innovative ideas that had potential to become institutionalized, like the Academy.

Chapters were encouraged to participate in the goal setting process, and were held accountable for their performance. “We ask all of our members to be respectful of their fellow Robins and to let the team know in advance if they are not likely to meet a particular goal”, stated Ghose. While positive reinforcement was the predominant form of feedback, the occasions in which the members of the Boiler Room or the founders needed to intervene to resolve a conflict or clarify acceptable and unacceptable behaviors were growing as the footprint of the RHA was expanding worldwide. Ghose explained, “Because of how decentralized we are, each chapter deals with a reasonable amount of management work. However, it is becoming very time consuming for us at the top level. We see more and more that we need to intervene in resolving conflict or provide guidance. We are still a young organization and we are evolving. We need to make sure we evolve in the right direction.”

Being 100% volunteer-based presented particular challenges with respect to retention in the medium-long term. Attracting new Robins was easy, but attrition was a significant problem. The absence of financial resources ruled out the possibility to offer monetary incentives. Promotions to higher levels of the organization's hierarchy increased the level of responsibility and accountability for the individual Robin, but did not come with pay raises or other perks. People self-selected into becoming a Robin, but nonetheless the founders felt they needed to maintain a high level of motivation at all times. The members of the Boiler Room shared with all Robins weekly leaderboards reporting the numbers of meals served by each city chapter, highlighting the best performers (**Exhibit 18**). Some chapters celebrated the "Robin of the month" selected based on a particularly meaningful initiative or contribution of one of their members. Other initiatives included identifying "example cities" as the source of best practices relative to particular aspect of the RHA operations (e.g. drive organization, social media communication, etc.), or sending written thank you notes to individual Robin's families to congratulate them on the contribution of their child to making the world a better place (**Figure 9**).

The Future

The targets the RHA had set for 2019 were very ambitious, but Ghose was confident they would achieve them. What gave him pause, instead, was the concern that, in order to reach the scale they needed to reach their overall goal of eradicating hunger globally, their organization needed to expand exponentially. He was encouraged by the success they had in establishing RHA chapters in other countries, but the rate of growth he envisioned for the future was significantly bigger and with a wider focus.

Two big questions lingered in his mind. Was the current management model suited to support a mission that was expanding beyond hunger? Would operating via shared spreadsheets and coordinating using social media be effective in a significantly larger organization?

Ghose stated, "I worry that we might not be doing justice to the potential growth of the RHA by not having dedicated resources or investing in better technology." For quite some time he had entertained the idea of hiring some full-time employees dedicated to support operations and expansion. However, full-time employees would likely need to be compensated, which, in turn, would require to bend the golden rule and start raising funds. Ghose worried about the repercussions this move might have on the culture of the organization. Would this open the door to expectations of being paid for other activities in the RHA? Would the introduction of monetary funds affect the motivation of Robins that had insofar taken great pride in delivering great accomplishments without money at all?

Exhibit 1 Robin Hood Army Global Presence



Source: <http://robinhoodarmy.com/>

Exhibit 2 The RHA Progression



Source: <http://robinhoodarmy.com/>


Exhibit 3 Hyperlocal Model

Robin Hood is people serving their local communities; several neighbourhood chapters anchor each city



Source: The Robin Hood Army

Exhibit 4 Launch Kit and Food Distribution Kit



ROBIN HOOD ARMY

Starting a RHA chapter is simple – the team needs to focus on:

SCOUTING CAN BE

It's always good to maintain a database in advance with definite numbers of people we can serve, this helps organize food distribution better.

HOMELESS CLUSTERS/SHELTERS
Simply driving around the neighborhood and marking out areas that have homeless people.

DEPRIVED/ OLD AGE HOMES/ DISABLED SHELTERS
Tying up with local NGOs contacts us to underprivileged sections who Robins can serve and spend time with.

WOLUNTEERS

It is important to ensure that there is a constant inflow of new volunteers.
Who are these people – simple really, do-ers like you who wish to create a difference.

Reach out to your personal network and invite volunteers to join on social media – sure that ways of growing your team. Every week of distribution should have about 1 new Robin.

FOOD PROCUREMENT

Contracting restaurants to come on board is no longer. Restaurants can be persuaded through quick meetings where we show them social media pictures and press updates about what the RHA has been up to. Restaurants can help us by:

- Providing surplus food from their operations
- Preparing freshly cooked food which will be distributed to the needy

FOOD LOGISTICS

Care without saying that we need to be 100% sure that the food quality is perfect for consumption in the same day.

While distributing restaurant leads, keep in mind that most Robins are working full time. So we follow a simple method of food procurement in which each volunteer either:

- Gets one single restaurant on board – taking complete responsibility of contacting the restaurant to contribute, collecting the food, and maintaining the relationship with the restaurant owner.
- In case some volunteers do not have time to meet restaurants, they contribute by getting food for 15 people (eg. home cooked sandwiches, 15 Aloo Parathas etc.)

This basically ensure that we can grow our volunteer base seamlessly without worrying about food availability.

CORE TEAM 101

Like every awesome initiative, it is super essential that every chapter gets this right. This is a team that kicks off the local chapter, this team can rotate according to performance and membership levels. The responsibilities mentioned above should be assigned as the individual responsibility of each person in the core team.


It's important to define timelines for each task (eg: "By 11th June, we need to find 500 needy people to serve")

It's great to have a bio-code within the team where if a person cannot meet her tasks within the agreed timeline, they raise this within the core team to be investigated. This way the overall team tasks do not suffer.

Enough meeting, there are 300 million Indians who are sleeping hungry tonight, go do your bit Robin!

EXECUTION - PLANNING

Source: The Robin Hood Army



ROBIN HOOD ARMY

The Robin Hood Army is all about decentralization and impact. Every city functions independently and does what works best for them. This is simply a template to make your drive action.

To go things start of you do that:

Set up secret Facebook and WhatsApp groups for your team. These groups are a great way for the team to internally coordinate, meeting, discuss plans, bounce off ideas and share updates.

Ask your Robins to wear green for the drive – ideal way to create an identity.

Assemble at a convenient meeting spot. Someone's bring water, guidelines or a coffee shop – see list of our RHA hubs.

Irrespective of how repetitive it gets over the weeks, for the new recruits – it helps to share the vision and current plans. Chatting will only come when people are passionate about the RHA.

Discuss and allocate plans which can be carried out over the week – ensuring needs for homeless clusters, allocating restaurant leads and how to make RHA's household name in your city.

Run everyone through the plan for the evening's distribution – which plans we are going to, team food distribution between cars, routes to be followed, getting everyone mentally prepared for what they will experience, importance of taking quality pictures.

Explain why pictures are important. A Robin's take "On RHA's first night of distribution, I realized that helping the less fortunate feel good personally, but honestly finding 10 odd people a night, once a week is not going to create any real difference in a country where millions are sleeping. So that we need to reach out to more people, more restaurants and more cities – and the best way to spread the word is capture our journey over photos. Make sure what we do right and inspire like-minded people to join the RHA."

Sharing the victory on social media etc. Check done with the day's done, collect all the photos of the distribution from the team members. Post the best pictures on Facebook and tag the Robin Hood Army official page. This will help us see your photos and post on the same RHA page for the world to see!

Take a group picture with the food before the car split over the distribution. This is the one you share with your grandkids when they ask you how you served the nation!

Be sensitive while taking pictures, be 100% sure that you are not offending anyone. The kids simply adore smiles.

Be compassionate while driving food – see street like "Aap karta kaha" "Wahid, you like to have dinner" while distributing.

Talk to people, listen to them – everyone has a way they love sharing. When talking to kids try to influence them to go to school, read books.

Try to catch up with the team post distribution at a restaurant partner over dinner – the bonding which really makes RHA family.

Final day to start with. Sunday. You can prepare for distribution during the day without coming in the way of work, people will be on time, there shall be less traffic on the streets.

WEEKLY

TIMINGS

6:00 pm
Dinner time

6:15 – 7:00 pm
Introduction, discussion – planning splitting people and food into smaller groups

7:00 – 8:30 pm
Who runs for the RHA distribution!

8:30 – 9:30 pm
Dinner Catch-up

- Ideal first team – people in your network who you know and trust to execute, influencers who have a good heart.
- Make sure you constantly coordinate with the RHA social media folks and provide them snippets of your distribution to share. It's a good practice to share these updates on social media, more people in your circle will want to join your cause. Social chapters also maintain albums recording each distribution in the Facebook event group.
- If people from the press, restaurant owners are coming for distribution – encourage them to not just observe but to take part in the team's activities. They are not helping the Army, they are the Army. The more people who are involved in the process – the greater the impact we can create.
- Identify people in the team who love what they do, and can take more responsibility.
- Overall – make it fun, create a team, and reach out to as many hungry people as we possibly can.

Go Robin!

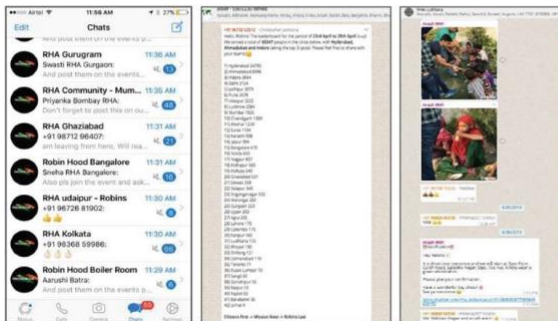
Exhibit 5 Spending Quality Time with the Citizens



Source: The Robin Hood Army

Exhibit 6 WhatsApp and Social Media

WhatsApp communication is our backbone



- **Real-time coordination**
 Robins post when food is available in their locality
- **Encourages competition**
 City Leads share weekly updates and metrics on 'The Boiler'
- **Enables sharing of best practices**
 Photos and ideas inspire new ideas for how to help their community.
- **Easy and accessible**
 Everyone has WhatsApp and it's free



Source: The Robin Hood Army

Exhibit 7 Robin Hood Army Culture 101

Our Culture

Citizens First → Mission Next → Robins Last

1% done	zero funds	think less, do more	decentralize	ownership
#oneteam	apolitical	all religions	lead on the field	empathy

Source: The Robin Hood Army

Exhibit 8 More than Food



With a clean shave, a head massage, a new wheel chair, and clean clothes, Robins helped share a smile with Lakshman Bhai

Enabling cataract surgeries to senior citizens who live in the streets - two Aunty's actually got their vision back

Training the next A.R. Rahman at the Robin Hood Academy on weekends

A day out to the water-park for street children - we had more fun just watching our champs

Source: The Robin Hood Army

Exhibit 9 Robin Hood Academy



Source: The Robin Hood Army

Exhibit 10 #MissionMillion2018

India has 190 Million hungry citizens.
This 15th August, Robin Hood Army shall serve a million of them.

CULTURE | CHANGE

Will you take care of the rest?

Request our leaders to build a hunger-free India
robinhoodarmy.com/missionmillion2018

Source: The Robin Hood Army: <https://robinhoodarmy.com/missionmillion2018/>

Exhibit 11 Robin Hood Army Sign-up Form



Source: The Robin Hood Army

Join our family.

How would you like to help, Robin?

Select how you would like to help* ▼

Full Name*

Mobile Number*

Date of Birth

Email Address

Facebook Profile Link

Select RHA City Location* ▼

Neighborhood*

Any thoughts? We'd love to hear them!

Our Core Principles

Citizens First → Mission Next → Robins Last

The RHA is a zero funds organization - I shall never collect or solicit funds in the name of the Robin Hood Army

The RHA is apolitical - I shall never use the Robin Hood Army for political purposes

The RHA includes all religions - I shall always respect all religions in my work with the Robin Hood Army

By checking this box, I agree to follow the Robin Hood Army's core principles.

Submit

Exhibit 12 RHA accomplishments in 2017

Robin Hood Army 2017 Non-Financial Statements For Year Ending 31st December 2017			
Debit	Amount	Credit	Amount
Rent	0	New Cities Launched	25
Wages & Allowance	0	Number of People Served Meals	3,142,004
Power & Maintenance	0	Street Children Admitted to School	478
Power & Fuel	0	Blessings	Infinte
Total	0	Total	1% Done

Source: The Robin Hood Army Facebook Page - <https://www.facebook.com/pg/robinhoodarmy/posts/>

Exhibit 13 Example of a Billboard



Source: The Robin Hood Army

Exhibit 14 Participation to the TV show "Kaun Banega Crorepati"



Source: The Robin Hood Army

Exhibit 15 Robins Come from all Walks of Life

Meet our Robin family, from all walks of life



Umaji
City Lead
Hyderabad, India

Age: 50
Occupation: Interior Designer
Volunteer Since: 2014



Dania
Volunteer Coordinator
Karachi, Pakistan

Age: 22
Occupation: Medical Student
Volunteer Since: 2016



Rathi Uncle
Expansion Lead
Pune, India

Age: 66
Occupation: Retired
Volunteer Since: 2015



Shabad
Food Donor
Delhi, India

Age: 34
Occupation: Restaurant Owner, Relax Express
Volunteer Since: 2014



Muskaan
City Lead
Kampala, Uganda

Age: 16
Occupation: High School Student
Volunteer Since: 2017

Source: The Robin Hood Army

Exhibit 16 City Birdseye View

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
City	Active Facebook Group	Active Volunteer Registration Email	Website Presence	75% Volunteer Funnel	Food Count Recording	T-Shirt + Sticker Templates Shared	Presence in Boiler		Culture Session Done
Abohar		Done	Done	Pending	Done	Done	Done		Pending
Agra	Done	Done	Done	Pending	Done	Done	Done		Pending
Ahmedabad	Done	Done	Done	Pending	Done	Done	Done		Done
Ahmednagar									
Ambala	Done	Done	Done	Pending	Done	Done	Done		Done
Bahadurgarh				Pending					Done
Bangkok	Done	Done	Done	Pending	Done	Done	Done		Pending
Bangalore	Done	Done	Done	Pending	Done	Done	Done		Done
Barabanki				Pending					Done
Belgaum									Done
Bhopal	Pending	Done	Done	Pending	Done	Done	Pending		Done
Chandigarh	Done	Done	Done	Pending	Done	Done	Done		Done
Chennai	Pending	Done	Done	Pending	Done	Done	Done		Pending
Colombo	Done	Done	Done	Pending	Done	Done	Done		Done
Dahod	Pending	Pending	Done	Pending	Pending	Done	Pending		Done
Dehradun									
Delhi	Done	Done	Done	Pending	Done	Done	Done		Done
Dewas	Pending	Done	Done	Pending	Done	Done	Pending		Done
Ghaziabad	Done	Done	Done	Pending	Done	Done	Done		Done
Gorakhpur		Done	Done	Pending	Done	Done	Done		Pending
Greater Noida	Done	Done	Done	Pending	Done	Done	Done		Done
Gurgaon	Done	Done	Done	Pending	Done	Done	Done		Pending

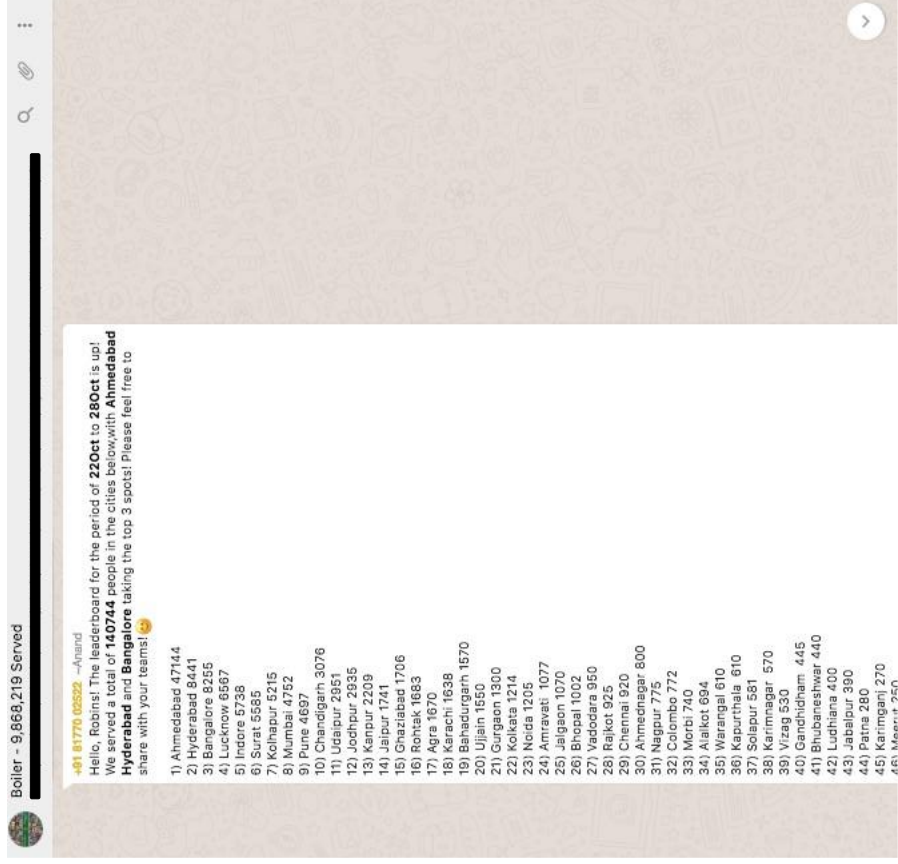
Source: The Robin Hood Army - Google Drive

Exhibit 17 Volunteer Management Dashboard

Volunteer Management (VM) Table - 1st January-31st January 2018						
City	Total Inbound Requests	Robins Contacted	Current Cycle First Drive	Previous Cycle First Drive	SPOC	Status
Sangli	2	100.00%	100.00%	90.91%	Annie	Done
Sri Ganganaga	3	100.00%	100.00%	75.00%	Nitesh	done
Hyderabad	67	100.00%	98.51%	85.51%	Barish	Done
Nagpur	6	100.00%	66.67%	28.57%	Gaurav	Done
Indore	13	100.00%	61.54%	54.55%	Kratika	Done
Noida	32	100.00%	56.25%	33.33%	Sachin	Done
Surat	38	100.00%	55.26%	75.00%	Yagnesh	Done
Colombo	6	100.00%	50.00%	0.00%	Aqeel	Done
Ahmedabad	72	100.00%	44.29%	62.00%	Krina	Done
Lucknow	62	100.00%	43.33%	30.00%	Pradeep	Done
Pune	54	100.00%	37.04%	30.56%	Arijeet	Done
Ghaziabad	13	100.00%	33.33%	8.33%	Isha	Done
Karachi	30	100.00%	33.33%	9.26%	Asad	Done
Jodhpur	44	100.00%	31.82%	5.88%	Akshayraj	Done
Jaipur	43	44.19%	27.91%	25.53%	Gourav	Done
Bengaluru	52	100.00%	26.92%	17.78%	Natasha	Done
Patna	4	100.00%	25.00%	30.00%	Santosh	Done
Delhi	166	100.00%	13.89%	12.42%	Rahul	Done
Gurgaon	23	100.00%	13.64%	5.56%	Abhishek	Done
Chandigarh	13	100.00%	8.33%	14.29%	Shibani	Done
Kolkata	38	100.00%	5.26%	0.00%	Tumpa	Done
Abohar	4	100.00%	0.00%	25.00%	Megha	Done
Agra	4	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	Varshika	Done
Bhopal	2	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	Amit	Done

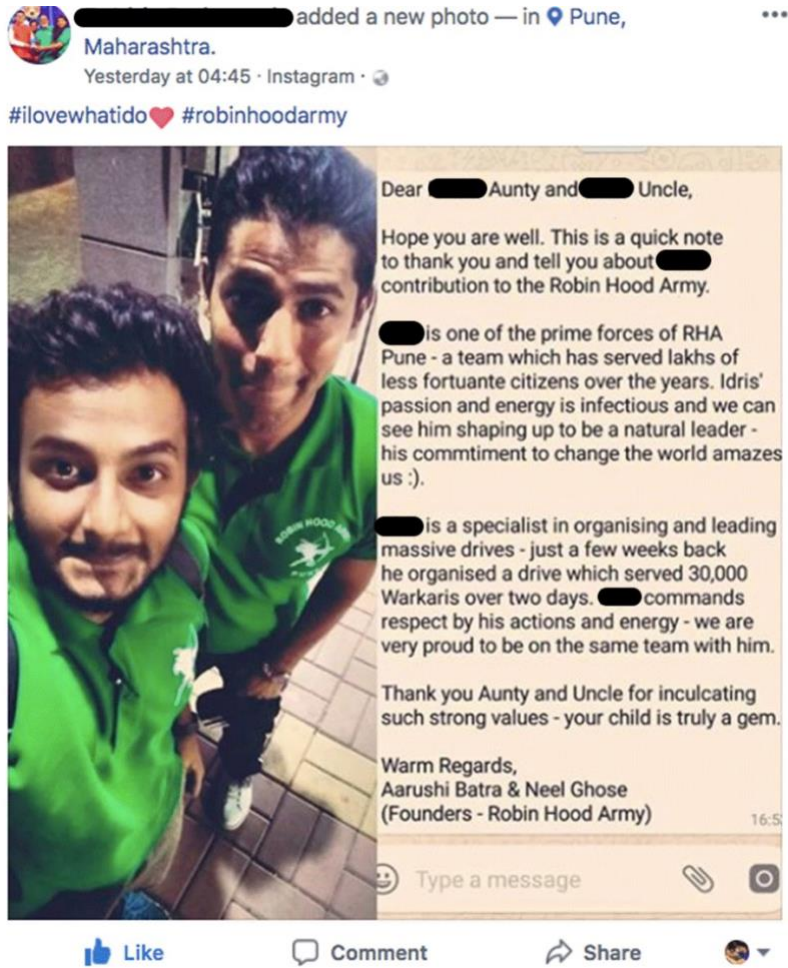
Source: The Robin Hood Army - Google Drive

Exhibit 18 Example of Leaderboard



Source: Robin Hood Army WhatsApp chat

Exhibit 19 Example of Thank You Emails



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/robinhoodarmy/posts/>

Endnotes

- 1 Re-Food institutional website: <https://www.re-food.org/en>
- 2 Robin Hood – Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robin_Hood
- 3 “How one Morsel can Make a Diffrence”- Aarushi Batra, TEDxKids@NMS
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zz2AoXUoHFI>
- 4 Robin Hood – Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robin_Hood
- 5 FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2017. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017. Building resilience for peace and food security. Rome, FAO. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-I7787e.pdf>
- 6 “Growth Of The Robin Hood Army” - Sanchit Jain, TEDxGLAU - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QICUOTs0Fro>
- 7 “Eat. Feed. Love.” Suvarna Mandal, TEDx IMT Ghaziabad - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6A1UrHirtXg>
- 8 “OMG! Yeh Mera India - Robinhood Army (RHA) - Great Initiative, Amazing people!!!”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tb2u85iRGvY>
- 9 “Growth Of The Robin Hood Army” - Sanchit Jain, TEDxGLAU - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QICUOTs0Fro>
- 10 “How one Morsel can Make a Diffrence”- Aarushi Batra, TEDxKids@NMS
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zz2AoXUoHFI>
- 11 “Eat. Feed. Love.” Suvarna Mandal, TEDx IMT Ghaziabad - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6A1UrHirtXg>
- 12 The Robin Hood Army institutional website - <http://robinhoodarmy.com/>
- 13 “Kony 2012” – Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kony_2012
- 14 “Eat. Feed. Love.” Suvarna Mandal, TEDx IMT Ghaziabad - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6A1UrHirtXg>
- 15 “Growth Of The Robin Hood Army” - Sanchit Jain, TEDxGLAU - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QICUOTs0Fro>
- 16 “OMG! Yeh Mera India - Robinhood Army (RHA) - Great Initiative, Amazing people!!!”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tb2u85iRGvY>
- 17 Akshaya Patra (TAPF) institutional website - <https://www.akshayapatra.org/>

