Project Parivartan as a harbinger of change

RailTel Corporation of India is a Government of India enterprise focusing on providing broadband and VPN services. It was founded in September 2000 under the Ministry of Railways. RailTel, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Indian Railways is also recognized as a Mini Ratna company of Category I. Passing through around 5,000 stations across the country, RailTel’s network covers all central business districts, towns, cities, mini and major metros.

The pan-India rollout of Project Parivartan in November, 2013 was a first-of-its-kind ERP project rollout among Indian PSUs to have been delivered within a record time of 10 months. It marked a significant milestone for RailTel towards its commitment of enabling India’s knowledge economy.

RailTel’s prime objectives are to:
- Create nationwide broadband telecom and multimedia network
- Modernize train control operations and safety system of Indian railways
- Contribute to realization of goals and objectives of the National Telecom Policy, 1999.

The Gurgaon-headquartered company ensures efficient administration across the country through four regional offices that manage the Eastern, Northern, Southern and Western India with offices in Kolkata, New Delhi, Secunderabad and Mumbai, respectively. These regions are further divided into territories that enable efficient working of the organization. It employs close to 500 employees across all its offices.

Need for technology
The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) as a part of vigilance administration and superintendence was encouraging the government and PSUs to leverage technology to promote integrity, transparency, equity and competitiveness in transactions. The CVC especially emphasized transparency and accountability in core functioning and the need for undertaking systemic
improvements and technology adoption. Following the guidelines issued by CVC in 2005, RailTel set about on the journey of implementing an organization-wide ERP in 2008. The idea was to bring the desired benefits and accountability for efficient functioning at RailTel.

**Journey of Project Parivartan**

RailTel undertook the ERP project as a strategic enabler to streamline, integrate, and standardize the business processes and overall operations.

After careful methodological planning, several brainstorming meetings and independent research on ERP implementation options, it was decided to bring in E&Y as the technology consultant. What followed was, several months of analysis of the organization’s system and working to come out with a ‘to-be’ design for the ERP implementation.

In June, 2012, RailTel invited proposals for implementation of the proposed organization-wide Oracle ERP solution. It was code-named ‘Project Parivartan’ meaning change as Parivartan was to be the harbinger of RailTel’s way of future business processes and functioning. Parivartan was initiated in January, 2012 when RailTel partnered with Wipro as its system integrator.

**The project**

RailTel intended to set up an integrated system with a single unified business information system for the organization’s enterprise resource management:

- It was required to have the necessary depth, breadth and flexibility to provide real-time information to all designated officers operating the business processes
- An appropriate distributed processing strategy for optimum utilization of resources and faster access to data and application
- The functional scope of the project covered implementation of ERP applications for finance, sales and marketing, human resources, operations and maintenance, and project and procurement.
- The scope for the set-up of the integrated ERP system also specifically mentioned change management for better adoption and involvement of stakeholders throughout the project.
- Technical and functional support for the stabilization period.

**Key challenges**

Some of the key challenges for Parivartan are listed below:

- Variance in business processes, templates and methodologies across regions.
- Compilation of data from all offices and fields, and standardizing that for the required data template.
- Sustaining enthusiasm in regional offices and fields when the project was based out of corporate office.
- Definition of roles and responsibilities that would be aligned to the current work of officers as well as the ERP process needs.
- Dealing with employee apprehensions and ensuring their active participation during all the project phases.
- Modules such as O&M were more relevant for fields and required continuous inputs from there even though the project was based out of the corporate office.
- Easy assimilation of the new system by employees.

To overcome the challenges of data collection and migration, a separate data team was formed constituting officers who handled the corresponding data themselves on a day-to-day basis. This ensured validation of data during the process itself.

**Success factors**

RailTel’s foresight and understanding of challenges of Indian public sector
enterprises in adopting the new technology helped it take unique steps that ensured success of the project.

- Project sponsorship of senior leadership from day one and CMD’s guidance on a day-to-day basis ensured that the project was given priority at all levels.
- Ownership of the modules by not just the core team at the corporate office, but also by the regional representatives, enabled better process redesign.
- Regional change champions ensured smooth communication flow and engagement among the project team and the other key stakeholders.
- Celebration of quick wins and leadership messages sustained the project momentum and enthusiasm.

Key value adds
Many value-added considerations were responsible for a smooth completion:

- Business process redesign workshops conducted during the course of the project to implement the best practices suited to RailTel’s needs and business requirements.
- Numerous awareness sessions and regional visits were held to ensure that all employees were made part of the journey since the project kicked off and they continued to feel involved and engaged throughout.
- All regional officers were kept abreast of the project news and development through the Parivartan portal website and the change champions based out of the regional offices.
- Awareness sessions at different regions helped in the participation of the field representatives and in propagating the benefits driven by the ERP implementation. Various levels of hands-on training lead to better adoption of the system.

Lessons learnt

- Cooperation of employees towards such organization-wide transformation cannot be gained only with initial buy-in. It can be ensured through:
  > Continuous support from top management.
  > Involvement and participation of employees during all phases in modules relevant to their work.
- Formation of sufficiently knowledgeable, dedicated core working group (CWG) with representation from all regions and territories, shared the inputs with the project team, and was fully dedicated to making Parivartan a success.
- Swift decision-making and empowerment of the CWG assured that critical decisions were taken on time and prevented slippages of the project schedule.
- The ‘To-Be’ process documents were finalized with inputs from CWG. Sufficient time was spent in understanding the ‘as-is’ and collection of business pain areas, which were then deliberated and compared with the global best practices. The result was a business process blueprint for RailTel.
- Project Parivartan’s portal served as the war room as well as the centralized repository for storage of all the project documents, messages and plans that were accessible to all the RailTel officers to keep them updated with the project progress.
- Data migration challenges were overcome through creating ownership of data migration among employees, and standardizing templates suited to organization’s business requirements, based on inputs from relevant officers.
- A well defined mechanism with clearly laid out levels of support along with the contact numbers ensured that all user concerns were addressed, and the first-time user anxiety was alleviated.
- Change management was responsible for timely stakeholder communication, awareness sessions and training. The change management leveraged the change agent network in the regions for localizing the change in the regions, maintaining the project momentum and ensuing better adoption of the solution across RailTel.