

'THANKS TO THE TRAFFIC, CITY NO LONGER THE BEST PLACE TO WORK'

By Apurva Venkat, Bangalore Mirror Bureau | Nov 28, 2015, 04.00 AM IST



In a worrisome sign that the Silicon Valley of India is losing its halo, engineering consulting firm Quest Global, which employs 3,000 employees at its two outposts in Bengaluru, has decided to give the city the goby, preferring Thiruvananthapuram instead for its next big round of recruitment which will see 1,000 employees added over a year. The decision admittedly stems from its distress at seeing employees struggle with traffic problems.

"Thanks to the traffic problem, Bengaluru no longer remains the best place for engineers to work," says chief operating officer Ajay Prabhu.

In keeping with this view, the company, with facilities at RMZ Ecospace and ITPL Whitefield, has decided not to hire more engineers here. "How long should I see my employees suffer? They have to wait for an hour just to enter and exit the facility. They are neither able to spend time in office nor with their families. They reach late and

want to leave early. The traffic stresses them out so much that even productivity gets affected. I now want a solution to this problem," said Prabhu.

Prabhu feels no internal projects to keep up spirits of employees can match the simple comfort of a smooth drive to work. "After spending two to three hours driving to work or back home, my employees are under great stress. Despite their best attempts at worklife balance, it does not happen. In the end, they all remain unhappy. That's not what I want."

The biggest problem area is the entry and the exit of RMZ Ecospace and, according to Prabhu, poor planning of the area is to blame. "With just one exit point for all 65,000 employees, it is obvious there will be huge bottlenecks before one can actually leave the place. Since most offices have similar timings, the jam starts at the parking lot itself and it often takes an hour to just move out of the workplace. Some of my employees have stopped using their vehicles and started taking cabs from outside the gate. It is painful to see some of my differently abled employees walk a kilometre just to save time."

The situation outside the gates is no better. With cars and twowheelers pouring out onto the outer ring road at the same time, the congestions are a nightmare. Compounding the problem are potholes.

"Bengaluru generates huge revenue for the country. Is it not fair to have proper infrastructure for employees? Even a potholefree road would make so much difference. It's time the authorities started focusing on these issues."

The COO says jams have given rise to another risk too. To save on time, employees start workrelated calls on the road itself. An employee recently had a minor accident while a conference call while driving, says Prabhu. "My employees and I try to work while stuck in jams. I have a driver so it's easier for me, but it's not the same for all employees. They are risking their lives for their work. I see employees trying to cross the outer ring road, which is very dangerous, just to save three or four minutes. We have requested for an overbridge, but every department passes the buck to another," he said.

Prabhu estimates IT companies in Bengaluru are losing Rs10,000 crore worth of productivity simply because of traffic issues.

In a plea to authorities, Prabhu says, "I request the authorities to maintain the name the city has earned. Give us potholefree roads. We are doing whatever we can, from carpooling to flexi timings, the traffic cop on the road is doing his best. It's time the authorities do their job."



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