Your Scrap, Somebody's Salary

The Chennai Model That Made Recycling a Donation

PAPERMAN · CHENNAI · AND A PAN-INDIA PLATFORM







A kabadiwala (scrap dealer) at a doorstep. India's old recycling network, given a phone number.

2010
founded in Chennai
by Mathew Jose, later an Ashoka Fellow

270
scrap dealers in the network
the kabadiwalas who already did this work (2016)

~90%
of users recycled for a cause
rather than taking the cash (2016)

35+
non-profits empanelled
receiving the value of the scrap

> India already had a recycling system: the kabadiwala (scrap dealer) who buys newspaper by the kilo. Paperman did not replace him. It gave him a dispatch system, and let the proceeds go to a charity instead of the household.

A household or office registers, a scrap dealer is sent, and the material is weighed and paid for. What sets it apart is the last step: the seller can direct the money to one of the empanelled non-profits instead of pocketing it.

A sale most people barely think about becomes a regular donation they hardly notice, and the dealer's round becomes a proper route. The model has since grown into recycling infrastructure and school programs.

HOW YOU CAN ENGAGE

The visit worth having is a collection round with a dealer, not a meeting at the office.

Go and stand in it.

Paperman

Every sheet in this set points to a place you can visit: a sorting platform, a solarised health centre, a processing floor, a driving lesson. It is real work, and all of it is open to visitors.

WHERE TO GO



A kabadiwala's shop, Chennai

The weighing scale, the ledger and the sorted piles.



A collection round

Doorstep to shop, the part of the chain nobody sees.



A school recycling program

Where the habit is taught rather than bought.

THREE QUESTIONS FOR THE ROOM

01 The informal sector was already efficient. What exactly did the technology add?

02 Nine in ten users gave the money away. What does that say about how small the sum was, and how large the friction?

03 Which other transactions in your own economy are too small for anyone to bother collecting?

WHAT WE RUN

Academic programs

Business, leadership, entrepreneurship, healthcare, technology, sustainability and culture. Immersions of 12 to 15 days built around one of them.

Faculty and dean cohorts

Site-based curriculum development with Indian universities, industry and state agencies.

Executive programs

Company visits, policy briefings and operator conversations, tailored to a sector.

Service learning programs

Working visits with non-profits, social enterprises and CSR partners, tailored to your group.

READS WELL WITH: CHAPTERS OF THE BOOK

12 Jugaad (frugal innovation) **16** Climate & Just Transition

SOURCES Paperman Foundation via Climate Action Live and YourStory's 2016 profile: founded 2010 in Chennai by Mathew Jose. Network and user figures are from 2016 and will have moved.