

Resilience in Revolution



Besides the chaos and destruction, a revolution has the fire to burn differences and the strength to bring out the best in people. Revolutions change everything. Ideologies, behavior and rules. But when a company is built on bonds greater than just the job, even the biggest revolutions can't shake its base.

25th January, 2011 marked a revolution that was about to bring a change like never before. Egypt, home to two Aditya Birla companies, was under a revolutionary siege and a lot of cities experienced complete anarchy. The citizens had come out on the streets to overthrow the unresponsive government and find their voice of freedom. Every employee, expats and Egyptians alike, felt the tremors of change. A sense of insecurity

prevailed with huge prison outbreaks and no law or order in sight.

News flashed all over the place, filled with distressing incidences, fires and destruction. Expats now felt threatened in a land they had learned to call their own. They weren't alone in their fear; Egyptian employees saw their lifelong memories turning into ruins.

The management had to grapple with two key issues. First, the continued threat to the life of their employees. And second, running a plant in the face of such uncertainty, ensuring that customers and employees did not suffer.

The Birla Carbon management team had several options and they had to pick the right one. But what was the right thing to do? Was it to leave their Egyptian employees to fight their own battle and take away all the expats? Was it to let those who've celebrated the company in its best moments and stood by it in its worst, live through their hell while the company saved the chosen few? But who are the chosen ones? Are they the people who share the same color, language and nationality? Or those who share a purpose, a vision and a team? They really had just one choice. They had to stand by their team. Every one of them. A decision that every employee commended. For, a team is made of people and not nationalities.

With continuing anarchy raging all around them the employees on shift chose to stay back and stand guard at the factory. Why did they choose to save their factory over their own lives? Because in the midst of the brewing revolution, they had found

one within. As the company refused to abandon them, they refused to abandon it.

Families in need were moved from Alexandria and provided space in the plant guesthouse. The locals supported them like a family would. The spirit of being one was shared equally. Despite the extreme pressures, the Egyptian military reached out to them, providing the team with necessary support and hope.

The trust of all colleagues in the senior management was rock solid. And they, as a unit, were ready to fight anarchy with complete order. The crisis outside didn't prevent the plant running at the same rhythm as always. With a curfew in place, the movement of every team member was carefully scheduled to ensure their safety.

Time passed and things were brought back to normal. But what every member of the team had gone through had changed the way they looked at the company, their colleagues and themselves entirely.

They knew now, more than ever before, that they are one team – together in good times and resilient in revolution.