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Infy pays early comers to beat jams

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BANGALORE: Early birds get the moolah. And a way out of the jam for companies hit by commuting delays because their employees inch through Bangalore's traffic maze. Think incentives, for those who start, and reach, early.

That's the basis of a collaborative project of Infosys Technologies and Stanford University. The INSTANT Infosys Stanford Traffic project, currently in its seventh week, is setting an example by offering monetary incentives to Infosysians who report to work before 8.30 am.

The project launched in October works on a system of credits that could be accumulated by employees to earn weekly rewards of up to Rs 12,000 each. Apart from saving on fuel worth Rs 20,000 every day, the project has triggered more early comers at the Infosys campus in Electronic City, says Balaji Prabhakar, associate professor of electrical engineering and computer science, Stanford University.

"The project attracted about 3,000 new early commuters. About 500 early comers have already been rewarded," says Prabhakar, who devised the incentive mechanism presented during a talk at IIM Bangalore on Friday. The credit incentives are open to commuters on Infosys buses as well as employees who take other modes of transport to work.

Credit system

- * Employee who swipes in before 8 am gets 1.5 credits
- * Those who swipe in between 8 am and 8.30 am get one credit
- * Those who turn up after 8.30 get none
- * Maximum of 7.5 credits to be earned through the week

Luring latecomers

Background research for the project between January 2005 and June 2008 revealed that the number of early commuters (starting time before 7.15 am) in Infosys buses had come down from 29% to 16%. The buses, typically, have a seating capacity of 49. Infosys runs about 240 buses on four major routes, from 120 starting points. GPS tracking of Infosys buses plying between Jayanagar and the E-City campus revealed that the 7.15 am buses were at least 30 minutes quicker than the 8.15 am buses that were invariably caught in the choking traffic points on the route.

In a survey done on employee response to the INSTANT project, 26% of respondents said they would start reporting to work earlier. Prabhakar says plans are on to extend the project till March 2009, with changes based on feedback. Other companies in E-City can tap into this idea. "INSTANT may not be the only solution but it can work as a complementary model, along with better signaling systems and infrastructure. What makes the system successful is people's participation," says Prabhakar.

INSTANT CREDIT

- * INSTANT offers monetary rewards for Infosysians
- * Project ensured 3,000 new early commuters
- * Up to Rs 12,000 to be earned in a week as reward
- * 500 early comers have already been rewarded
- * Plans on to extend project till March 2009

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