



CASE STUDY • PEOPLE MATTERS INFINI-T AWARDS INDIA 2026

From Bhujia to Bytes: An HR Tech Implementation Run by HR, Without IT or Consultants

Bikaji Foods International Limited

Infini-T Awards Category: HR Tech Implementation of the Year



**TOGETHER
WE WIN!**

OUR PEOPLE. OUR PRIDE. OUR PROMISE.

Executive Summary

Bikaji Foods International is India’s third-largest ethnic snacks company and the world’s largest manufacturer of Bikaneri bhujia, exporting to around 25 countries from manufacturing sites across Rajasthan, Assam, Karnataka, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Our **3,694 employees** sit across five entities in India and the United States, spread over plants, warehouses, sales operations and corporate offices, and split between staff, workers and trainees. Delivering one consistent HR experience across that spread is not a matter of preference. It is the difference between a company that behaves like one organisation and one that behaves like five.

2 People from HR ran the implementation, with no IT team and no consultants	7 days To resolve an HR query, down from as long as 60	23 days To close a recruitment cycle, down from as long as 110	118+ Workflows, letter templates and reports built and maintained in-house
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Before Darwinbox, only payroll and leave-attendance were automated, running on a local incumbent system. Everything else lived on paper and spreadsheets. Data was inconsistent between systems, processes lacked transparency, and the same errors recurred because the gaps behind them were never closed. The clearest measure of the old state is payroll itself: **six people, working for a week, still producing inconsistent results**. Different plants and business units ran different processes, so any organisation-wide decision required manual collation before it could even be discussed.

The turning point was not a module. It was a transfer of ownership. **HR became the process owner instead of depending on IT or other support functions**, and the implementation that followed was run by two people from HR working with **Darwinbox’s** implementation team, with no internal IT involvement and no external consultants. What that team has since built and maintains without help is our central claim: 31 workflows, 35+ document templates, 52+ reports, 10+ leave policies and 7 attendance policies, all configured in-house. Query resolution moved from as long as 60 days to **7 days**, recruitment cycles from as long as 110 days to **23**, and payroll transitioned onto the platform with **zero downtime**.

CONTEXT

Only Payroll Was Automated. Everything Else Was Paper.

Our growth had outrun our HR infrastructure. A local incumbent system held the employee master, leave, attendance and payroll; every other people process ran on spreadsheets and paper, differently in each location. Three problems followed from that, and each one cost the business something concrete.

The challenge we faced	The consequence it caused
Employee master data was incomplete and inconsistent across systems and entities	Compliance risk, and incorrect reporting of employee data across the organisation; the kind of error that is invisible until an audit or a payroll cycle surfaces it
No structured way to manage employee queries or day-to-day HR operations	Transactional tasks took repeated follow-ups to complete, which meant slow query resolution and a poor employee experience, particularly for people away from the corporate office
No standardised HR processes across locations and business units	Different sites ran different processes, so any organisation-wide view required heavy manual collation before a decision could be taken
Payroll depended on people rather than on a system	Six people were tied up for a week on each payroll run, and the output was still inconsistent; effort spent without confidence in the result
Employees had no self-service route to routine information	Payslips, leave balances and role or reporting information all had to be requested from HR, which turned the HR team into a lookup service and left frontline employees least well served of all

Give the Process to the People Who Own the Process

The choice that shaped everything else was made before any configuration began. We decided that HR, not IT, would own and operate the platform end to end. That is an unusual decision for a manufacturing-led enterprise, and it is the reason the rest of this looks the way it does.

We selected Darwinbox on criteria that follow directly from that decision: it is built for process owners, so HR can run processes without a technical intermediary; it is configurable in the way Lego is configurable, so a team that understands its own data and workflows can shape the system to match; it is designed on the assumption that processes will keep changing; and its pricing was clear, without the hidden implementation and change costs the alternatives carried.

The deployed scope is deliberately broad for a first phase, covering **Core HR, Time Management, Recruitment, Performance Management, Helpdesk, Expense Management, Benefits, Analytics and Vibe**. We branded Vibe internally as **Baatcheet** - conversation - and positioned it to encourage candid exchange rather than top-down announcement, which is a small choice that says something about the intent behind the whole programme.

We engineered adoption rather than mandating it. Sponsorship was visible and senior: our Managing Director backed the programme personally, and the CFO's contribution was a sentence rather than a budget line, "Go ahead, I have your back." Beneath that, HR, plant and business champions were identified at each site to provide local support, and training was built by role rather than delivered generically. The implementation itself was led by a Darwinbox-certified management trainee alongside our Chief People Officer, with the HR team running trials and feeding back continuously.

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"Go ahead, I have your back."**

The Data Was the Drag. The Mindset Was Harder.

Employee master data was the first obstacle and the most predictable one. Records pulled from legacy spreadsheets and disparate systems across five entities were incomplete and inconsistent, and the first upload had to be reworked before Core HR could go live cleanly. Adoption then proved uneven: corporate teams moved quickly, while plant and field users needed a second round of hand-holding before self-service took hold.

We also declined the configuration we were first offered. Rather than accept a simplified group-level model, we asked for policies mapped to actual shift, location and entity realities, which is why the system now carries 10+ leave policies and 7 attendance policies rather than one of each. That was more work, and it was the right call.

The hardest part was neither of those. It was shifting ownership. Getting HR to accept that they, not IT, would own and configure the system was a change in mindset as much as capability, and it slowed the early phase. What changed as a result is that we restructured the programme around **enablement rather than delivery**: champions were named locally, role-based training replaced generic sessions, and CHRO-level visibility was made explicit rather than assumed. The pay-off is exactly what our HR team now runs unaided: 31 workflows, 35+ document templates and 52+ reports, all built and maintained in-house. That capability exists because the hard part was worked through rather than designed around.

We restructured the programme around enablement rather than delivery.

What Two People Built

The cycle-time figures below are measured against our own prior state over January to December 2025 and verified by the process owners named against each. The configuration counts are current platform state.

Measure	Before → after
HR query resolution	15—60 days → 7 days to resolve a helpdesk query, per the internal ticket log held by HR Operations
Recruitment cycle time	29—110 days → 23 days per requisition, per our talent acquisition team’s internal tracker, a compression that lets the same recruiters carry more open roles without adding headcount
Onboarding	Un-standardised and ranging from 7 to 40 days depending on role and location → a standardised pre- and post-joining journey with a 30-60-90 day plan for every new hire
Payroll	Six people for a week per cycle, with inconsistent output → transitioned onto the platform with zero downtime
Workflow automation	31 workflows built in-house, covering training confirmation, increment letters, production approval, reimbursement, loan approval, offer and requisition management, travel approval, the 30-60-90 day onboarding survey, engagement and milestone celebrations

The Impact, continued

Measure	Before → after
Letters and documents	35+ document templates configured, so most key employee letters are now system-generated and self-service rather than requested from HR
Reporting and governance	52+ reports created in-house, replacing the manual assembly of workforce information from the local incumbent system, spreadsheets and paper records
Policy configuration	10+ leave policies across the group companies and 7 attendance policies across shifts and locations, mapped to real operating conditions rather than a simplified group template
Expense management	Travel and reimbursement claims processed on the platform at an average turnaround of 4.5 days

Read together, the configuration counts are the more telling half. **118 or more workflows, letter templates and reports now exist that no vendor was paid to build and no IT team was asked to maintain.** For an award category about implementation, that is the difference between a system that was installed and a system that is owned.

The Question the Plant Floor Started Asking

The payroll transition itself went through without downtime, which for a business running six manufacturing sites is the kind of non-event that takes considerable work to achieve. But the moment we point to is a quieter one, and it happened afterwards.

Blue-collar colleagues began coming to HR asking for access to the platform, not to raise a complaint, but because they were curious about their own grades, roles and where they sat in the organisation. Information that had always existed somewhere in a file was suddenly something they could look at themselves.

That is a change in what HR is for. Where the function had been experienced largely as payroll enforcement, it became something employees approached voluntarily. **Access delivered clarity, and clarity delivered a kind of dignity**, particularly to a frontline workforce that had previously been the least well-informed group in the company about its own employment. That shift will outlast any single metric here.

Access delivered clarity, and clarity delivered a kind of dignity.

From Our Leadership

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I have always been told, ‘Tech is IT’s job, even if it’s HR.’ While I would wonder, ‘I know my process, show me how it will work, I need to be enabled.’ Darwinbox did exactly that. This is the second time I have chosen Darwinbox. This implementation was done by just two of us and Darwinbox’s implementation team, no IT, no consultants. Our success proves the product’s promise: simple, configurable, and constantly improving.

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Deepshikha Thakur • Chief People Officer, Bikaji Foods International

Why We Believe Our Implementation Stands Apart



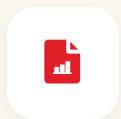
An implementation with no implementation partner

Two people from HR, working with Darwinbox's implementation team, delivered the programme with no internal IT involvement and no external consultants. In an award category defined by implementation, doing it without the usual delivery apparatus is the differentiator, not a footnote to it.



HR as process owner, by design

The decision that HR would own and configure the system was made up front and held through the difficult early phase, when it would have been easier to hand the work back to IT. Everything the team now builds unaided traces back to that one call.



Configured to the plant, not to the template

We rejected a simplified group-level model in favour of policies mapped to real shift, location and entity conditions. 10+ leave policies and 7 attendance policies across five entities. The localisation is the proof of ownership, not an exception to it.



Self-service that reached the plant floor

Most key employee letters are now system-generated and self-serve, and frontline employees have direct visibility of their own grade, role and reporting line. In a workforce this weighted toward plants and field operations, that is the hardest population to reach and the one that gained most.

The Capability Outlasts the Project

Because configuration sits with HR rather than with a vendor or an IT backlog, the cost of our next change is close to zero. A new entity, a new shift pattern or a new letter format is a task the team completes itself, in the same week it is asked for. That is what makes the model scalable: we are not buying capacity for future change, we already hold it.

Our roadmap extends Darwinbox across the full employee lifecycle, taking in payroll and benefits and beginning to embed AI into HR and wider business processes. With the transactional load carried by the platform, our HR team's own time has moved toward strategic work and employee engagement. The shift the function was reorganised to make possible in the first place.

We are not buying capacity for future change. We already hold it.

CONCLUSION

The Benchmark We Set

A company built on a 1980s manufacturing innovation is not the obvious candidate for a self-run HR technology programme. We had only payroll and attendance automated, everything else on paper and spreadsheets, five entities running five versions of the same process, and a payroll cycle that consumed six people for a week and still could not be trusted. The conventional answer would have been a large implementation partner and an IT-led programme.

We did the opposite. We moved ownership to HR, accepted the slower start that caused, and built the capability rather than buying it. What that produced is a platform running Core HR, time, recruitment, performance, helpdesk, expenses, benefits, analytics and engagement across 3,694 employees, with query resolution down from as much as 60 days to **7**, recruitment cycles down from as much as 110 days to **23**, onboarding standardised for every hire, payroll migrated without a single hour of downtime, and **118+ workflows, templates and reports built by the people who use them.**

The standard we set: an HR technology implementation measured not by the size of the team that delivered it but by the capability left behind when the project ended, where two people in HR configured a platform for five entities without IT or consultants, and where the clearest sign of success was a plant-floor colleague asking for access so he could see his own role in the organisation.