

CASE STUDY • PEOPLE MATTERS INFINI-T AWARDS INDIA 2026

Built to Be Used: Digital Adoption Across 12,745 People and 65 Locations

Jindal Stainless

Infini-T Awards Category: Digital Adoption and Change Leadership



Executive Summary

12,745 Employees on the platform across 17 entities and 65 locations	97% Of new hires onboarded before their joining date	3,000 → 260 Monthly helpdesk tickets, a 91% reduction	223 Workflows live
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Jindal Stainless Limited (JSL) is India’s leading stainless-steel manufacturer and ranks among the top 10 stainless steel conglomerates in the world. A flagship company of the OP Jindal Group and a listed entity, it recorded a consolidated annual turnover of **₹42,955 crore (USD 4.86 billion) in FY26**, operates **16 manufacturing and processing facilities** in India and abroad including Spain and Indonesia, and runs a worldwide network across 12 countries. It is currently ramping toward **4.2 million tonnes of annual melt capacity in FY27**.

On Darwinbox, the footprint is **12,745 employees across 17 entities and 65 locations in India**, spanning blue-collar, white-collar and contractual populations, inside a total workforce exceeding 24,000. Public-market accountability means the compliance, audit and governance scrutiny is real, and at this scale manual processes do not merely run slowly. They stop being manageable.

The challenge was never whether the technology would work. It was whether **12,745 people across 22-plus states and dozens of plants and offices would actually use it**. Payroll data still moved through manual handoffs. Employees defaulted to old habits the moment a system felt unfamiliar. JSL named the condition itself: **Volume × Speed × Variability = Perfect Storm**, an environment where adoption could not take hold because the experience kept shifting under people’s feet.

The turning point was not deployment. Most enterprises manage that. It was **refusing to call deployment “done.”** JSL ran adoption as its own workstream, with leadership sign-off built into rollout gates and HR checkpoints designed around how people actually worked rather than how the system was configured. **Most enterprises measure transformation by go-live dates. JSL measured it by who was still logging in a year later.**

45% → 87% Employee satisfaction (eSAT)	59% → 95% Survey participation	58 → 64 eNPS
95 → 65 days Time to hire, a 32% reduction	697 → 11,168 Candidates processed, a 16× increase	₹1.75 Cr Reduction in external recruitment consultant spend

Volume × Speed × Variability

In JSL’s own account, the pre-Darwinbox reality was a people problem before it was a systems problem. Multiple systems, each fit for purpose, meant employees and HR teams had no single consistent way to interact with the organization. Email-led documentation and approvals pushed people toward manual workarounds instead of trusted digital workflows. Everything had a record, but the record lived in silos nobody could rely on.

The lack of integration did not only threaten data integrity and audits. It meant plant and corporate users experienced HR completely differently depending on where they sat, with manual checks and approvals that broke down the moment scale kicked in. The result was a broken experience for plant and corporate users alike.

Where adoption kept failing before it started

The challenge JSL faced	Why it made adoption hard
Multiple systems, each fit for purpose, with a partially used HRMS	No single consistent way for 12,745 people to interact with the organization, so every location invented its own habits
Email-led documentation and approvals	Manual workarounds became the path of least resistance, and the digital route stayed the harder one
Lack of integration across platforms	Data integrity and audit exposure for a listed entity, with silos no one could rely on
Manual checks and approvals at plant scale	Processes that worked on paper broke the moment volume hit, teaching people not to trust them
Plant and corporate users on different experiences	A workforce split across blue-collar, white-collar and contractual populations, each meeting a different HR
Unstructured, email-based expense processes inside HR itself	HR spent its time chasing transactions instead of leading the change it was asking everyone else to make

Refusing to Call It Done

The decision that shaped everything was to treat go-live as a starting line. Adoption became a workstream with its own gates: **leadership sign-off built into rollout checkpoints**, and HR checkpoints designed around how people worked rather than how the system was configured. That is the moment digital transformation stopped being an IT milestone and started becoming a workforce habit.

Darwinbox was positioned as strategic infrastructure carrying **Core HR, Time Management, Talent Acquisition, Onboarding, Payroll Lite, Performance Management, Talent Management, Talent Hub, Travel and Expense, Helpdesk, Rewards and Recognition, People Analytics, Studio, and VibeX**, integrated outward to Naukri, LinkedIn, Disprz, MakeMyTrip for self-booking, and XoXoDay for rewards fulfilment.

223 workflows are live, spanning performance management, onboarding and exit, employee self-service records, letters and NDAs, travel and expense, and automated compliance reporting including Form 25. Real-time entry and exit governance was built explicitly for non-desk frontline plant workers rather than corporate staff, improving safety and site-level tracking at plant locations.

**A focus on people rather than system configurations.
That is the moment digital transformation stopped
being an IT milestone and started becoming a
workforce habit.**

Adoption as a Discipline, Not a Directive

Adoption at JSL was not a communications wrapper around a go-live. It was a designed programme with a method, a sequence and its own evidence base, and it began well before launch. What follows is that method, stage by stage.

1.

Map the stakeholders, then stage the change

The change management workstream opened with a **stakeholder mapping exercise** to identify sponsors, senior leaders who would visibly back the change, and change agents across functions who would carry it forward on the ground. That mapping shaped a structured, staged approach: **create urgency** by communicating clearly what employees and managers stood to lose by not adopting, making the cost of inaction tangible rather than abstract; **build a guiding coalition** of the senior leaders and sponsors the mapping had surfaced; **define the strategic vision**, a clear end-state for the digitized HR experience that gave the rollout a consistent north star; **mobilize a volunteer army** by converting change champions into a grassroots force inside their own functions and locations; **remove barriers through the coalition**, using it at each feedback gate to clear the organizational and process roadblocks that surfaced; **celebrate short-term wins** by recognizing the employees, functions, locations and HR teams that adopted early; and **maintain acceleration** through ongoing recognition and the adoption dashboards, so adoption did not plateau once the initial push was over.

2.

Design with employees, not for them

Rather than designing processes in isolation and presenting a finished system, JSL brought employee voice into the design phase itself. **Journey-mapping workshops** put representative employees from different functions and locations through their existing HR interactions, leave requests, payroll queries, performance check-ins, and asked them to flag where the process broke down or felt cumbersome. Those sessions ran *alongside* the stakeholder and vendor consultations already underway, so employee input and business requirements were triangulated at the same time rather than sequentially. **Process-validation sessions** followed, walking draft workflows back through the same groups to confirm the redesign actually solved the pain points they had raised. The result was a design employees recognized as theirs, which lowered resistance materially later in the rollout. **Change management never had to sell a system that had never asked for their input.** Alongside it, every business unit's HR processes were mapped, with in-depth consultations across the 17 entities to find where standardization was possible and where genuine difference had to be preserved. Systems were tailored to specific needs while holding a standardized spine.

3.

Pilot where the blast radius is small

Full organization-wide go-lives carry real risk: a misconfigured workflow or an integration gap discovered post-launch affects every employee at once. So each major module, recruitment, leave and attendance, performance management, was first deployed as a **pilot or proof-of-concept with one representative business unit or plant location**, chosen to reflect the complexity of the wider rollout with a mix of manufacturing and corporate roles. Crucially, the pilot ran in a **live environment with real transactions, not a sandbox**, so it surfaced genuine friction: edge cases in approval hierarchies, data mapping issues between systems, usability gaps that UAT in a controlled environment would have missed. Only once a pilot stabilized was the module extended to the rest of the organization, in waves rather than a single big-bang launch.

Adoption as a Discipline, Not a Directive

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4.

Run the feedback loop more than once

The pilot was never a pass-or-fail gate. It was a structured feedback loop. Input came through three channels at once: **pulse surveys for sentiment, helpdesk ticket patterns for functional issues, and focus group sessions for qualitative detail**, consolidated into a prioritized list of process and configuration changes. Changes were made, and in several cases the pilot unit itself validated the revised workflow before it was signed off for wider release. The **pilot, feedback, refine, reimplement** cycle sometimes ran more than once for a given module before full rollout. The value shows up twice over. **Technically, it caught issues while the blast radius was small. Culturally, it demonstrated to employees that their feedback had visible, direct consequences on the final system**, which became a talking point in later change communication and built trust ahead of company-wide adoption. That is the whole argument for why adoption held.

5.

Train to scale, certify to last

Training was designed to scale without losing the hands-on component that drives real adoption. **Self-paced online modules hosted on Disprz** carried the what and the why, system navigation, feature walkthroughs, policy context, consumable asynchronously across locations. They were paired with **in-person offline workshops** where employees worked through actual scenarios, raising a leave request, running a performance review, processing a reimbursement, on the live system with a trainer present to troubleshoot in real time. Employees, and change champions in particular, could complete a fuller change-management pathway and receive a **formal certificate**. That certification did double duty: it incentivized full completion rather than partial engagement, and it created a visible, recognized cohort of certified champions employees could turn to locally, reducing the load on central HR and the helpdesk after rollout.

6.

Take it to the shop floor

It began before launch, with pre-launch mailers building early buzz and curiosity. The **roadshow** was then the primary vehicle for communicating what's in it for me, run as a series of interactive sessions across locations for employees, managers and HODs. To stop it becoming a one-way presentation, sessions were **gamified** with live polls, scenario-based challenges and friendly team competition, which noticeably lifted participation compared with a standard town-hall format. Each session closed with a short quiz, which did two jobs: it reinforced retention through active recall rather than passive listening, and **the aggregate quiz scores gave a real-time read on how well each session had landed**, used to identify locations or groups needing a follow-up session before go-live. A roadshow that measures whether it worked is a different instrument from one that simply happens.

Adoption as a Discipline, Not a Directive

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7.

Measure adoption, do not assume it

Once systems went live, adoption was measured rather than assumed. **Monthly dashboards tracked department-level usage:** login frequency, volume of self-service transactions across leave, travel and reimbursements, and engagement with modules including performance management and VibeX. That gave HR and leadership an ongoing view of where adoption was strong and where it lagged, rather than relying on anecdote. Departments or locations showing slower uptake were **flagged for targeted follow-up**, additional training, direct outreach from change champions, or manager-level nudges, rather than a generic organization-wide reminder. The same dashboard data fed the **quarterly rewards programme**, giving a data-backed basis for recognizing the departments that had most fully embraced the tools, which reinforced adoption through visible recognition.

8.

Change champions, from day one to certification

Change champions were not brought in at the training or roadshow stage. They were **identified and involved from the start of the project, during process mapping and design**, so they carried context and ownership from day one rather than being handed a finished system to promote. They went through the full change-management training pathway and received **formal certification**, validating that they were equipped to represent the system accurately, not just enthusiastically. Post-certification they took on an active delivery role of their own, running trainings and providing hands-on handholding for colleagues within their own functions, which **extended the central HR and training team's reach into every department without diluting quality**, because the people delivering that support were certified and function-embedded.

9.

Make sure every cohort had someone to turn to

At every stage, design workshops, pilot selection, training delivery, roadshow attendance and change champion identification, participation was deliberately representative across **age groups, tenure bands from new joiners to long-tenured employees, locations spanning corporate and plant sites, and gender**. This was not incidental. Journey-mapping sessions and pilot cohorts were *composed* to include a cross-section of those groups, so the resulting process design and feedback reflected the full diversity of the workforce rather than **just the loudest or most tech-comfortable segment**. The same principle governed champion selection: every cohort had someone they could relate to and turn to during the transition, rather than champions skewing toward one location, age group or tenure band. In a workforce that runs from a plant floor to a corporate office and from a new joiner to a thirty-year veteran, that is the difference between adoption and adoption among the people who were always going to adopt.

What Adoption Looks Like When It Holds

1.

The helpdesk went quiet

Monthly HR helpdesk tickets fell from **3,000 to 260**, a 91% reduction, as the AI-powered chatbot absorbed the questions HR used to answer by hand.

2.

People stopped asking HR to do things for them

Leave and attendance transactions are now **100% employee-initiated**. Employees self-generated **150+ HR letters in six months**, saving 50+ hours of HR effort and getting instant access. Form 16, payslips, letters and HR services run **24x7** through self-service and alumni portals.

3.

They came before they were chased

97% of new hires are onboarded on Darwinbox before their date of joining. That figure is not a system capability. It is proof that people across 22-plus states and dozens of sites chose the digital path by default, before anyone had to follow up.

4.

Sentiment moved with it

eSAT rose from **45% to 87%**, survey participation from **59% to 95%**, and eNPS from **58 to 64**.

97% of new hires onboard before day one — people choosing the digital path before anyone has to follow up.

What Adoption Looks Like When It Holds

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5.

Recruitment compounded

Time to hire fell from **95 days to 65**, a 32% reduction. Candidates processed rose from **697 to 11,168**, a 16× increase, against a digital pipeline of 19,000+ candidates a month sourced through Naukri and LinkedIn. External recruitment consultant spend fell by **₹1.75 crore**.

6.

Performance became a conversation people rated

83% of SMART goals were rated good or excellent, **77.5%** reported positive sentiment on manager career and performance conversations, **73.4%** agreed the performance system is meritocratic, objective and unbiased, and **100% of performance discussions produced an IDP**.

7.

Compliance stopped being an event

Statutory forms, policy acknowledgements, compliance trainings and labour compliance workflows are **100% automated**, as is the assignment and tracking of mandatory compliance learning. Employee email IDs and vendor codes generate automatically, enabling **Day-1 productivity**.

8.

Volume proves the habit

16,000+ travel requests and **11,000+ reimbursement claims** processed in the last 12 months, and **1,876 R&R nominations** producing **114 award winners**, published openly on VibeX.

Nobody mandates their way to such numbers. People chose the digital path because it was the better one.

The Timeline Was the Hardest Part

Implementation did not move in a straight line. What was expected to be a defined rollout stretched into a longer, iterative process. As the team worked through JSL's requirements, **several product fitment gaps surfaced** that the platform could not immediately accommodate.

Rather than force-fitting workarounds, many of those gaps became formal automation proposals, and a number were **eventually built into the Darwinbox product roadmap itself**, which extended timelines further.

JSL pushed back on settling for partial solutions and held out for automation that genuinely fit processes, particularly around checks and balances such as **leadership review in separations and admin gates before relieving letters**, rather than accepting a faster but less governed rollout. That meant repeated course correction, revisiting plans, reprioritizing what could go live now against what needed building first.

The hardest part was never a single technical gap. It was the timeline. Each round of fitment issues pushed delivery further out, and replanning meant resetting expectations, internally and with the client. What changed because of it was the approach: **the team moved from a fixed-rollout mindset to an iterative one**, treating go-live not as a deadline but as a series of validated releases, with automation proposals feeding product development rather than being treated as scope creep. That shift is what produced a stable, trusted system instead of a rushed one.

Go-live became not a deadline but a series of validated releases.

Moments That Mattered for Employees

1.

Feeling heard at key life and career moments

Pulse surveys triggered automatically at onboarding, performance feedback, return from maternity leave, career milestones, and exit meant employees could share feedback when it actually mattered to them, and **93% of identified concerns were resolved**, shifting the perception from “feedback goes into a void” to “my voice leads to visible action.”

2.

HR help in their pocket, 24×7

Instant HR support through Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp, channels they already use, let employees get policy answers, apply for leave, regularize attendance, and generate employment letters in **three clicks or fewer**, anytime and from anywhere across offices and plants. **eSAT rose from 45% to 87%.**

3.

Clearer, more meaningful performance conversations

AI-assisted goal generation and SMART goal scoring helped employees set higher-quality goals aligned to business priorities; **77.5% agreed they had constructive development discussions with managers.**

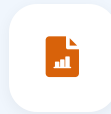
From “feedback goes into a void” to “my voice leads to visible action.”

Why Jindal Stainless Stands Apart with Darwinbox



Adoption measured a year later, not on go-live day

Most clients stop at go-live and usage plateaus. JSL treated adoption as a continuous discipline: engagement kept deepening after go-live rather than tapering off, with integrations, Amplify builds and custom flows all added once people were already in the system.



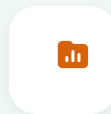
Friction turned into product, not workarounds

Fitment gaps became 200+ custom business and process flows, each friction point used to make the system fit real behaviour rather than forcing behaviour to fit the system. Several fed directly into Darwinbox's own product roadmap. That is change leadership by design, not adoption rescued after the fact.



The frontline was in scope, not an exception

A workforce spanning blue-collar, white-collar and contractual populations across 65 locations, with real-time entry and exit governance built explicitly for non-desk plant workers. Adoption that only reaches corporate is not adoption.



Proof in volume, not in policy

16,000+ travel requests, 11,000+ reimbursement claims, and 97% of new hires onboarded before joining. Nobody mandates their way to those numbers. People chose the digital path because it was the better one.

In Their Words

“Jindal Stainless has been through a period of rapid growth, and technology has been central to enabling that scale. But our experience has been that digital transformation succeeds or fails not on the strength of the platform, but on whether people choose to use it.

That belief shaped how we approached change. Our workforce spans manufacturing locations and corporate offices, multiple generations, and widely varying levels of digital familiarity. We were clear from the outset that adoption could not be assumed simply because a solution had been deployed, so we built a deliberate change journey around every rollout.

It began before launch. Pre-launch mailers created early buzz and curiosity. Critical stakeholders were brought in during the design phase itself, not presented with a finished product, so that the solution reflected how people work. We tested with employees and acted on their feedback before going live. Enablement ran on two tracks — eLearning modules for scale and in-person training for depth — anchored by a train-the-trainer certification model that built capability within our own teams rather than leaving it with a central function.

The step that made the difference was taking it to the shop floor. We designed roadshows that went to where our people are and answered the only question that really matters to an employee: what’s in it for me. These were built to be genuinely engaging (gamification, rewards, participation), rather than another presentation. The jump in adoption following those roadshows was significant and immediate.

The outcome is visible in the numbers, but what I value most is what sits behind them: employees who understand why we changed, leaders who champion it, and a culture where technology has strengthened rather than replaced human connection. That, to me, is what change leadership must deliver.”

Sushil Baveja • Chief Human Resources Officer, Jindal Stainless

CONCLUSION

The Benchmark It Sets

There is a version of this story that ends on go-live day. Twelve thousand people across 65 locations get a login, a press release goes out, and the project is declared complete. JSL's own description of what it was up against explains why that version would have failed: multiple systems each fit for purpose, email-led approvals, everything on record and nothing reliable, plant and corporate users living in different organizations. **Volume × Speed × Variability = Perfect Storm.** In that weather, a rollout can look finished on paper and stay empty in practice.

So JSL refused to call deployment done. Adoption became a workstream with its own method: stakeholder mapping, a guiding coalition, employees in the design room before the vendors left it, pilots run live where the blast radius was small, a feedback loop that ran more than once, certified champions embedded in every function, gamified roadshows that quizzed themselves to find the sites that needed another visit, and monthly dashboards that turned adoption into something you could manage rather than hope for. Then it kept going, long after most programmes declare victory: **223 workflows live, 200+ custom flows** built after go-live, each one a friction point turned into fit rather than a workaround.

The numbers that follow are consequences, not the achievement. Helpdesk tickets from **3,000 a month to 260**. Leave and attendance **100% employee-initiated**. eSAT from **45% to 87%**. Survey participation from **59% to 95%**. Time to hire from **95 days to 65**, and **₹1.75 crore** of consultant spend that stopped being necessary.

The number that matters is **97%**. That is the share of new hires who complete onboarding before their first day, before anyone has met them, before any manager can chase them, before a single mandate can reach them. Across 22-plus states and dozens of plants, people choose the system when nobody is watching. **That is the only honest test of adoption, and it is the one JSL set out to pass.**

Jindal Stainless's HR technology work has drawn external recognition including the ET Human Capital Award for HR Digital Transformation, the CII HR Excellence Award, and two People Matters Infini-T Awards in 2025, for Digital HR Team and for Transformational Data Governance in HR.

Most enterprises measure transformation by go-live dates. Jindal Stainless measured it by who was still logging in a year later, and that is the standard it sets with Darwinbox: a platform that did not have to be enforced, because it had been built to be used.