

# WILDCRAFT - RISING IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY

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## Teaching Note

“In times of uncertainty, the ability to adapt is an important source of a firm’s competitive advantage. The pandemic has brought to cognizance the critical importance of strategic and operational agility. Business strategy should be more frequently used to detect and navigate unanticipated shifts in the market, such as shocks to the demand of products and services or disruption of established business models. In terms of operational agility, operations will have to be reinvented to increase resilience to environmental jolts.”- Oleana Kacperczyk, London Business School

This case demonstrates the implementation of the aforementioned concept of Strategic and operational Agility, adaptability and innovation in response to changes/shocks in business environment for sustained competitive advantage.

Diversification in Product portfolios, changes in business model, financing, manufacturing, collaborative alliances, HR sourcing, marketing and supply chain management issues faced and resolved by Wildcraft have been presented in this case.

This case can be used to teach Strategic Management Course.

## The Case

Wildcraft, an outdoor and sportswear company, was born in a garage in Bangalore by Dinesh

K S, Gaurav Dublish & Siddharth Sood, in 1998. The company's products are sold in over 200+ exclusive stores and 4,000 multi-branded stores in India and abroad.

Starting as a hobby and passion, its first product was a dome tent. It also makes backpacks, rucksacks, and camping and hiking equipment, among other things, entered the performance footwear and clothing industry in 2016 adding significant revenues. It was run as a hobby with limited commercial focus.

Under the management that has led the firm since 2008, it has pursued a strategy of expansion and increased revenue by over 100x in less than a decade. The company grew at a compound annual growth rate of 75% from 2007 to 2012 and continued to grow annually at 50% till 2018 & is now pursuing a 25% revenue growth.

## The Pandemic [2019-2021]

As the nation was bracing for lockdown in March 2019, Flipkart- Fidelis and Sequoia Capital-backed backpack maker, was on the verge of shutting down its stores. From being a company catering to outdoor sport, hiking, and camping equipment the pandemic and the worldwide lockdown was a shock for the company, with all outdoor activity coming to a standstill.

However, the strategic think tank of Wildcraft, Siddharth, and Gaurav, demonstrating strategic



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and operational agility in uncertain times, immediately diversified its product portfolio to tactical gear like hazmat suits, Personal Protective Kits (PPE), face masks, face shields, and eyewear. They bagged a huge order of 80 crores from the Indian defense forces, and this helped them not only to continue being in business but also to see unprecedented growth. It quickly scaled up its manufacturing lines as demand for tactical gear shot up post the Covid-19 outbreak.

It also secured government approval for its 'super mask' with a proprietary filtration system for three types of particles. These masks have the same level of filtration efficiency as N95 masks and can be washed up to 30 times. It currently sells W95 masks and has launched two new models – W95+ and W99 and reusable respirators. WildCraft has developed 16 new products during the pandemic to combat the pandemic.

The firm has collaborated with over 60 such units through a hub and spoke model and these partnerships were planned for about 6-12 months. From one warehouse, it has also gone up to 33 warehouses today to ensure supply to distributors within 24 hours. It is also planning to raise production capacity by 20 percent in the next few weeks.

The challenge for Wildcraft was to automate business processes to enable an efficient and seamless fulfillment cycle of online orders and manage their inventory efficiently. Wildcraft partnered with Vinculum, an Order management solution company, to scale up their online operations and provide an Omni-Channel experience to their customers.

In Aug 2020, Wildcraft partnered with India MART a B2B platform to expand its footprint for its products, Super mask, and PPE kits.

Wildcraft collaborated with IBM in the same month, for the implementation of 360-degree Customer View, a Customer Relationship

Management (CRM) solution to increase customer assistance and enhance the consumer experience with an AI-powered virtual chat-bot in eight Indian regional languages. (Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Kannada, Oriya, Telugu, Tamil, and Malayalam). This effort was to harness the real power of CRM, in challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

They are now innovating in developing technologies for the re-usability of hazmat suits. As Siddharth mentions, "We strongly believe that what is today a health crisis, & is evolving into an economic crisis, will also turn into a global environmental crisis with the mammoth non-biodegradable disposables being left behind in its wake", their products use revolutionary technologies to provide exceptionally safe, stylish, reusable, and environment-friendly solution, at incredible prices.

Until March 2020, they employed more than 3,700 people. Now, the company employs about 30,000 people in the States of Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh, indicating the enormous growth at a time when all other business houses were either shutting down or laying off employees in their bid to survive. The challenge for the HR managers was to ensure staff strength be augmented 12 folds i.e. from 3700 to 30000 within 45 days to meet the spurt in demand. They resorted to contractual staffing but also had to deal with hygiene, workplace safety, and COVID protocols in addition to the applicability of workplace laws on contract workers.

Wildcraft has so far raised Rs 400 crore through a mix of equity and debt from investors including Flipkart Group, Fidelis, and Sequoia Capital. It is looking at raising another Rs 150 crore to fuel its expansion. It is looking at a turnover of 1000 crore in FY2021 at a 25% growth over 2019-20.

Wildcraft is now attempting to inspire Indians to fulfill their emotional necessity to step out and explore the world, post COVID19, through their new inspirational anthem and ad campaign 'Hain Taiyaar Hum', created by Ogilvy. This is putting their next foot forward...

### Case Questions:

1. How did Wildcraft navigate through the unprecedented changes during the pandemic?
2. What plans of Wildcraft indicate that the firm is future-ready?
3. Discuss the importance of adaptability for a business

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