



Interview of “One Team” (sept. 2017) – Manila, Philippines

Mr. Yuri Sarmiento, founder

ACTIVITY : private transportation company created in 2009 that owns a fleet of jeepneys (traditional transportation vehicle in the Philippines) and buses operating in the region of Manila.

STAFF : 10 employees at office; 39 drivers; 19 conductors and motor pool workers

“Bus drivers are seen here as the bottom of the society. The little money they earn it is spent in food. Moreover, it exists here in Philippines a system of boundaries with operators of transport. This is a poverty circle I could not endorse. This rent payed by the Jeepneys drivers must be added to the fuel and the mechanic cost they pay. A jeepney driver earn around 2000/ 3000 pesos a day (the equivalent of 6\$) for nearly 20 hours of work. To this social injustice we must add that they are more prone to environmental diseases than the other people. Tuberculosis and chronic pulmonary obstruction diseases are common place in this social background.

Considering that boundaries system is oppressive we took measures. We created a fixed salary around 5000 pesos a day, which is much more than the current varying salary of the sector. We are also paying social benefit contribution for our employees and finally we give them a birthday leave.

I also consider that environmental issue is crucial because, no matter if you are poor or rich, whoever is concerned by that. For that reason, we launched zero emission jeepneys. They are 100% electric and fueled by lead acid batteries. At the beginning people was laughing at us. But little by little they became interrogative. “How does it charge?” they were asking (laughing). So, we took the decision to start free rides to make people aware and confident of that technology. For two years I have assumed the expenses of that rides. Authorities not even gave us license plate because it was new for them and they wanted not to register them.

But after February 2012 all changed, when we reach to have our first franchise in the country. Advertising began to increase and support initiative soared. And finally, in 2013 by meeting a Congressman in charge of transport, we convinced him that our vision was interesting. So much that we were pushed to a bigger scale (national), working with transport companies leading to the creation of one-team.



Yuri Sarmiento (left) with Corentin Rodriguez (intern at Backbone)

September 1, 2013 was the D-Day for One-team. The creation of One Team led to big changes. We reached running the fleet efficiently. Now there is only one operator per vehicle and we switched from 15 operations days per month to 21. **Otherwise one of our biggest expenses is the training. We train all our employees, because some of them are undergraduate and considered by some as unemployable. Our values are: family goes first and that stealing is not fair** but also learn them to drive properly and that drivers do a proper labor.

In June 2017, Public Utility Modernization Program laid down that jeepneys franchises were taken away from individual property. It allowed One Team to work better with some stakeholders without replacing them. Cooperatives and corporations became partners. Moreover, we have created a more inclusive model through a better protection and a higher income. We also switched to Euro 4 and electric motors, we changed the size of the Jeepneys, we redesigned the jeepneys and we introduced the right entrance (instead of back entrance) for the vehicles.

We have now 70 diesel 4 and 27 electrical jeepneys which is a small amount in Metro Manila where 67 000 jeepneys are circulating. From 2012 to 2017, we have never expected this scale but we face some oppositions. Some people were against the new design of our jeepneys which was for them against cultural icons. But this standardization brings great savings for us. Nevertheless, we are looking for recycled plastic to wear our jeepneys to recover this cultural identity.

There is another reason behind my commitment. I almost had a car accident facing a Jeepney driver with my personal car and my family within it. Here public transportation doesn't have a good image. But it is useless to complain about that without acting. The world will not change by itself. But if we want to change the things we must dialogue with the stakeholders. We must convince instead of imposing our vision.

