



IIMC-CRC-2023-04

*IIMC CASE RESEARCH CENTER (IIMCCRC)  
NISIGANDHA BHUYAN, MITRA SOM SAHA  
DECEMBER 2023*

## **RUDEFINE EXCELLENCE CONSULTING: BUILDING AN ETHICAL ORGANIZATION**

**November 2021, Mumbai**

*“Most gulls don’t bother to learn more than the simplest facts of flight – how to get from shore to food and back again. For most gulls, it is not flying that matters, but eating. For this gull, though, it is not eating that matters, but flight. More than anything else, Jonathon Livingston Seagull loved to fly”<sup>1</sup>*

Major Ravi Khanna was in a contemplative mood as he stood, staring at the skyline of the maximum city, the bustling Mumbai metropolis. Within an hour from now, he was scheduled to log into a virtual meeting with the Chairman of a Dubai-based multinational business conglomerate—a \$2.5-billion diverse Group. This meeting was supposed to be decisive, aimed at finalizing the formalities required for onboarding RuDefine as the consultant of this conglomerate. The Group had diverse business interests in FMCG, Pharma, Retail, Manufacturing, Real Estate, and Merchant Trading, among others; its Chairman was a Harvard Business School alum. Major Khanna had to put his best foot forward to showcase the value his consulting expertise could offer. RuDefine was primarily invited to design the people’s practices across the group, institute best practices in HR, build a potent talent pool that drives

---

<sup>1</sup> Pg 4, Bach, R. (2014). *Jonathan Livingston Seagull: The New Complete Edition*. Simon and Schuster.

---

*Prof. Nisigandha Bhuyan of the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta and writer Mitra Som Saha developed this case study as the basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate the effective or ineffective running of an organization.*

business with accountability and ownership, and work towards developing strong employer brand equity.

Over the last three months, there have been several virtual meetings with the Board of Directors, and today's meeting was slated to be final and determinative. Shouldn't Major Khanna be in a celebratory mood for this feat, especially because RuDefine, a nascent organization, a small entity with just ten employees, was all set to go global? In fact, this was the third year since its inception, and it was poised for a massive leap that would help it grow manifold. Major Khanna, instead of reveling in a celebratory mood, found himself in a contemplative state.

Major Khanna had an obsession, and it often felt like a noose around his neck. His fixation? Virtues, values, and ethics. For him, life and work were about upholding ethics and human values first, always and every time. Being an Indian Army veteran, this came very naturally to him. He believed that making money was not a big deal. What was essential, instead, was firmly upholding human values and professional ethics. For him, the economics of business, revenue, and commercials came a distant second. However utopian and idealistic it might sound, for Major Khanna, it was the most rational course of action.

Consequently, RuDefine, the organization he incepted, mirrored his unwavering commitment to these principles. Within three years, the organization boasted of a remarkable growth story that had been painstakingly curated. Major Khanna deliberately never wanted the organization to grow so large that he lost sight of his initial intent. He was resolute in preventing its growth from obscuring his initial vision and strived to cultivate a legacy where RuDefine was renowned not merely for its financial success, but more importantly, for its steadfast adherence to human values, ethics, and the exceptional quality of its intellectual services.

So far, he has successfully kept the value aspect alive and intact at RuDefine. Each facet of RuDefine's ecosystem — its organizational culture, goal setting, governance model, the thought leadership that the consultants of RuDefine fostered, or the transformative change management interventions that RuDefine was called in for — rested on a foundation of human values. Once the project with this global conglomerate came to fruition, RuDefine would need to oversee the functions of fifty-odd companies along with its ongoing projects. Currently, the biggest client of RuDefine was an Indian FMCG company with a turnover of more than \$187 million. Now, faced with the prospect of managing a plethora of functions across multiple organizations, Major Khanna was poised to usher RuDefine into a new era. The imminent challenge lay in maintaining the impeccable standards of quality that had become RuDefine's hallmark while navigating a broader and more complex landscape.

Would growth as exponential as this dilute the value system that formed the core purpose of RuDefine? Would the task of overseeing the functions of fifty companies at different

geographical locations across continents, without compromising the core values of RuDefine, be too humongous to handle? After the leap, would he be left with enough bandwidth to keep a hawk's eye on the values and ethics held onto by RuDefine? Maybe, in today's meeting, he should insist on including an exit option at the end of the year. In one year, the challenges of keeping the value piece alive would surely come to the forefront. At the end of the year, he would propose to continue only if he had clarity about staying pledged to the core purpose of RuDefine across locations and at all levels. Withdrawing from a project of this magnitude in one year would result in significant revenue loss, though. Major Khanna was jolted out of his stupor, his contemplative reverie, by the insistent buzz of his phone. His Google calendar reminder prompted him to log in for the meeting. He clicked on the 'Join Meeting' tab with the questions still lingering.