

# PUNE WIELDS MANPOWER

Adequate skilled and unskilled local workforce has helped the city sail smoothly while many of its counterparts face labour shortage

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At a time when several realtors across the country are cribbing against the labour shortage and absence of migrant workforce to justify the cost overheads and delays in meeting the project timelines, Pune real estate market is showing the way forward. It is meeting these two challenges, thanks to local talent. There is no dearth of manpower in this market, skilled or unskilled, and the reason is pretty simple; instead of looking to tap the workforce from other regions, city developers are banking on its talent pool to meet their requirements.

Pune market is indeed blessed with availability of local talent and developers are putting it to best use. Most of them are engaging local work force to make sure that labour shortage or absence of talent pool does not affect their timelines of delivery of the project. Even as talent shortage is a major issue confronting the real estate sector across the country the Pune market definitely stands positioned better.

Analysts point out that realty business is quite different from other manufacturing businesses and that is one of the main reasons why it is a difficult business in terms of attracting, managing and retaining workforce. Since the sector has specific requirements, the real estate community and government bodies need to work together in order to ensure that this demand-supply gap is met. However, developers in Pune are showing the way forward to other markets afflicted with the talent shortage.

This also raises a fundamental question as to whether this is a wilful strategy to use the local workforce or is borne out of the need for complying with certain mandate. In some other markets, Noida for instance, the government authorities have issued advisory to the developers to make use of more local talent. However, in Pune the developers insist it is a strategy that has evolved more by design than default.

Abhay Kumar, CMD of Grih Pravesh Buildteck, maintains that realty business is such where requirement of local talent is always preferable

and since it is available in Pune it always works in favour of the developers. He adds that the local manpower is also helpful for the developers as far as their understanding the market is concerned. Therefore, it is always a wilful exercise on the part of developers to hire local talent.

"Pune can be compared with any other metro as far as availability of talent is concerned. Both skilled and non-skilled professionals are found in abundance here one of the main reasons being Pune has got a wonderful mix of urban and semi-urban population. On one side, Pune being closer to Mumbai adds to

the supply of skilled talent, and on the other side the rural area supplies adequate non-skilled labourers," Abhay says.

Kishor Pate, CMD, Amit Enterprises, Housing, agrees that for Pune-based developers, local talent is used in every project. According to him, in a regular housing project in Pune more than 80 per cent of the manpower used is local. There can be a higher percentage of outside talent in a luxury project; especially when it involves national or international level architecture firms, interior designers or other specialist consultants as these tend to have their own teams. Also, externally appointed firms, which tackle facilities management post completion may have teams with a mix of local and outside manpower.

"For a Pune-based developer, using local talent is a matter of choice and makes sense in almost all respects. Project construction is a time-bound process and all teams involved need to be readily available on a constant basis. Even the developers coming to Pune from outside use local manpower, an essential factor in timely completion. One of Pune's USPs is its rich and diverse manpower pool. In fact, Pune is not only a reliable talent market for the city but for national and international markets as well. Skilled and unskilled talent is readily available, and local developers are usually able to build and scale their teams efficiently," says Pate.

Arvin Jain, Managing Director, Pride Group, adds that to a maximum extent Pune developers use locally sourced talent since there is no dearth of qualified professionals.

Construction labour teams are also maintained locally, but this aspect also depends to quite a degree on inward migration from nearby villages. Sometimes, it is necessary to bring in people from other cities and there can be various reasons for this, ranging from occasional and unanticipated dearth of construction labour to the precise requirements of more specialized projects.

"Developers in Pune will always seek to build their manpower from locally acquired talent, as this is not only good from a point of view of the generated employment benefiting the city but also in terms of managing attrition. While there is no compulsion as such in this regard, it goes without saying that it helps in maintaining market goodwill. Pune has no shortage of skilled talent but ironically, developers sometimes have to attract highly qualified professionals who passed out from one of Pune's many excellent colleges back into the city," says Jain.

In a nutshell, Pune real estate market is blessed with local talent pool, which helps them both ways-meeting project timelines as well as keeping manpower cost in check. Of course, in exceptional cases only there are sometimes shortages in construction labour, which makes it necessary to bring in manpower from other cities. The developers are candid to admit that since the pay scales are relatively lower in Pune than in Mumbai, the city loses quite a bit of qualified talent for that reason each year. But unskilled talent is usually not a problem.

(The writer is CEO, Track2Realty)

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■ IN THE REALTY BUSINESS, LOCAL TALENT IS ALWAYS PREFERABLE. A REGULAR HOUSING PROJECT IN PUNE HAS OVER 80 PER CENT OF THE MANPOWER LOCAL. EVEN THE DEVELOPERS COMING TO CITY FROM OUTSIDE USE LOCAL MANPOWER, AN ESSENTIAL FACTOR IN TIMELY COMPLETION. WHILE THERE IS NO COMPULSION AS SUCH IN THIS REGARD, IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT IT HELPS IN MAINTAINING MARKET GOODWILL.

IMAGING: PRASHANT LOHAR

