

# COOPERATIVE EDUCATION REPORT

Building Brand Positioning at Alep Digital

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Title : Building Brand Positioning at Alep Digital

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#### Abstract

This cooperative report entitled "Building Brand Positioning at Alep Digital" incorporates details on the content management and brand positioning at Alep Digital. Alep Digital is a sales consulting agency that helps accelerate the revenue generation of bold and disruptive companies. It is a remote company based in Calgary, Canada, however, the team members are from different parts of countries like USA, Nepal, and India. The major objectives of this report are: (1) To understand the importance of brand positioning for a company in an industry where there is a huge consumer behavior change (2) To understand how the content management impacts the company's positioning. Throughout this internship period, I gathered deep knowledge about the adoption and development of the SaaS industry in India as well as other countries. Additionally, I was able to gain valuable learnings about how a company operates remotely and how to promote employee engagement in such an environment to develop the feeling of camaraderie among the team members. My major responsibilities included assisting in the content management department, collaborating with my team members and learning about the company's brand positioning. Upon the completion of this internship, it was evident that the company was able to have a strong position in the market through its branding and communication. The company also seems to have a great potential of expanding its workforce to more and more strategic locations besides Nepal and India. With the up-and-coming adoption of SaaS companies, the company has a strong future with its brand positioning.

Keywords: brand positioning, content management, content writing

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# **List of Acronyms**

KCM: Kathmandu College of Management

WHO: World Health Organization

IBBA: International Bachelor's in Business Administration

SaaS: Software as a Service

COVID-19: Coronavirus disease

## Effect of the ongoing pandemic: COVID-19

It has been more than two years since the first human case of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, was detected. The initial human traces of the virus were first found in Wuhan city, China in December 2019. Due to its highly infectious nature, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a Global Pandemic in March 2020. This outbreak brought the world to a standstill with a huge impact in daily lives, country's economies, and people's livelihoods.

The first case of COVID-19 in Nepal was confirmed on 23 January 2020 (Pradhan, 2020). The country went on its first lockdown from March 2020 to July 2020. This decision to control the virus put a halt on the country's ongoing activities in different sectors. From schools to offices to restaurants, everything was closed down. Depending on its nature, many people were compelled to carry out their work from home and many businesses either shut down or had to adapt to a remote working environment. Even KCM conducted classes online.

During the second wave of coronavirus a second lockdown was announced in Nepal in late April 2021 which finally ended in late September 2021. However, even after the lockdown situation eased, and the vaccination was provided to most of the citizens, there was still a lot of risk getting out of the house unless it was absolutely necessary. As for my situation, I was lucky enough to get accepted into an organization that worked remotely. Even though the organization is based in Canada, it has a remote workforce consisting of people from different parts of the world such as USA, India and Nepal.

I consider myself extremely lucky to not have had any severe disruptions because of the pandemic during my internship period. Moreover, it gave me an opportunity to learn more about how a company operates remotely.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## 1.1. Company Profile

Established in 2020, Alep Digital was founded by grasping the opportunities that were brought by the changing dynamics of the sales industry. The name Alep Digital is derived from the Sanskrit word "Alep" which means "unsoiled and pure". For the last 20-25 years, the sales industry has been experiencing a huge shift. The fast-progressing technology has increased the SaaS adoption in countries around the world which created a massive opportunity for companies that provided cloud application services.

Alep Digital is a salesforce of skilled and tech-augmented professionals committed to realizing the reach and transformational potential of bold and disruptive SaaS and technology products. Alep Digital is a global outsourced sales and customer success company with expertise across a variety of industries including technology, telecom and SaaS sales. The team includes sales experts, marketers, creators, technologists, and divergent thinkers. Through a mix of data, 'Human-Skilled' talent, and cloud platforms Alep Digital is changing the way brands think about scaling customer acquisition. Its mission is to accelerate the revenue generation of such SaaS and technology companies and provide outsourced sales solutions to find, acquire and engage customers across all channels (Alep Digital, 2021).

For over 20 years the Alep Digital management has been building some of the most successful sales programs by leveraging a scalable, tech-enabled sales framework supported by integrating Digital Marketing, Inside Sales, and Advanced Analytics. Alep Digital accelerates the global growth of emerging and disruptive brands with best practices to drive real and measurable business outcomes through a customer-centric, insight-based selling approach. Based in Calgary, Alberta, Alep Digital is truly a remote sales organization. The company covers many countries across different continents and delivers programs in multiple languages.

To help companies design, implement, and deliver customer-focused programs and gain an edge over their competitors, Alep Digital provides the following solutions:

## • GTM Fast-Track Platform

Alep Digital helps companies to source, identify and nurture the right targets with their proven omnichannel approach, experienced sales teams, and specialized Go-to-Market programs.

### • Digital Marketplace

Alep Digital's partnership with CloudBlue offers a powerful and flexible Commerce Platform as-a Service that enables companies to grow and scale their subscription business.

### Assisted Sales

Alep Digital helps companies drive their revenue results across the end-to-end customer lifecycle with a transformative approach to reach new geos, segments and markets.

#### Outbound Sales

Alep Digital actively seeks potential buyers, then reaches out to the prospect via cold calls and emails, strategically moving the prospect towards a purchase decision through a process of follow ups, demos, negotiations, and close attempts.

## • Sales Data Solutions

By layering data from the public web with research-based intent, companies get more clarity on the buyer's journey, without juggling multiple tools. Plus, it is all scored so they can filter through the noise and reach their future customers, first.

## • Premium Customer Support

Alep Digital helps companies to maximize retention and expansion revenue with tailored motions that drive renewals, cross-sell and upsell, and customer adoption. Alep transforms the 'Cost Center' to 'Profit Center' for its clients with its premium support services.

### 1.1.1 Mission

The company's mission is to accelerate the revenue generation of bold and disruptive SaaS and technology companies and provide outsourced sales solutions to find, acquire and engage customers across all channels. Alep Digital aims to level the playing field for or small and medium-sized businesses by offering creative customer acquisition services (Alep Digital, 2021).

#### **1.1.2** Vision

The vision of the company is to disrupt the traditional sales model and bring about a change in the sales industry. Alep Digital's vision is to help companies having disruptive products

grow and accelerate their revenue growth as well as become a trusted partner in its clients' journey of growth and sales (Alep Digital, 2021).

### **1.1.3** Values

Alep Digital is based on five pillars (Alep Digital, 2021):

- 1. Passion: Alep Digital believes in being committed to the work they do from the heart and mind.
- 2. Diversity: Being an international company with team members from around the world, Alep values diversity and believes in inclusivity.
- 3. Collaboration: Alep Digital believes in working together, across boundaries, to meet the needs of customers and to help the company win.
- 4. Creativity: Creativity also forms the core of Alep Digital as it always strives to solve customers' problems in new and innovative ways.
- 5. Persistence: No matter the difficulties, Alep Digital believes in pursuing one's dreams and goals.

## 1.1.4 Strategies

Alep Digital's major focus is to move away from traditional selling and approach the concept of selling as creating a proper relationship by being a true partner of the company it is associated with. The business model is based on the growth of the product it is approaching. Rather than focusing on the revenue it is generating, Alep Digital's main strategy has always been focusing on creating relationships, providing consultation and valuable insights. It also focuses on promoting the idea that sales can be done from anywhere. With a sales team having an expertise of over 15 years, the company's strategy is to provide a disruptive sales approach, and provide an unparalleled competitive advantage with its product training academy.

### 1.2. Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of a company is a crucial factor since it defines levels of communication, information exchange, management, and delegation of responsibility. Alep Digital has a flat organizational structure. A flat organizational structure is one that has few or no tiers of intermediate management between the leaders and the frontline personnel. Due to their small size and lack of need for hierarchical management, small enterprises and start-

ups usually have flat organizational structures. Within a flat structure, there are fewer stages between an entry-level employee and the company's CEO, thus most employees have a stronger sense of accountability and autonomy in their employment.

Alep Digital is a remote company with team members in different countries like USA, Nepal and India. The company is led by the founder and CEO, Mr. Deepak Malik. There are four different departments that operate under the CEO which are as follows: HR Department, Operations Department, Training Department and Marketing/Creative Department. Each of the departments are handled by a manager who looks after the respective team and team members. The Marketing/Creative team that I worked under was led by the Content Lead, Mr. Swastik Subba. My fellow colleagues included designers and web developers.

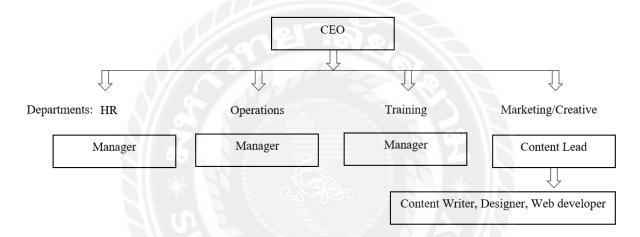


Figure 1: Organizational structure of Alep Digital

### 1.2.1 Job Position

I joined Alep Digital as an intern in the creative/content management department and I worked under the direct supervision of the content lead who was also my job supervisor. Since Alep Digital is a remote company, my entire internship was work from home. I was given work to complete entirely on my own and along with that, I assisted my supervisor in various tasks along with my other team members. My job position required me to create various forms of marketing communication for the company and its clients. This included writing content and copies for the company's website, creating blog posts, articles, guides and case studies for the company's website, writing post copies and creative copies for the company's social media page, posting the creatives regularly in the company's social media page, writing copies for company's clients and so on. I had to understand the company's values and how they wanted to be perceived by their audience to create relevant content and

copies following the brand guidelines. I had to ensure that the marketing communications were consistent and engaging for the audience. My job also required me to collaborate with designers and website developers in my team.

## 1.2.2 My Job Position in the Company's Organizational structure

I worked in the content management department under the supervision of Mr. Swastik Subba who is the content lead at Alep Digital. My fellow team members included graphic designers and website developers, who were all from Nepal.

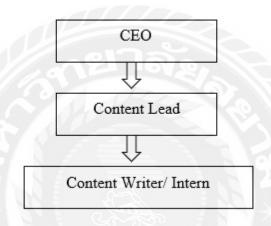


Figure 2: My Job Position in the Company's Organizational Structure

## 1.3 Intention to Choose the Company

I have always been interested in content creation, content management, and branding. However, the inside sales industry was something I was very unfamiliar with. My main intention of joining this company was to challenge myself, learn new skills, hone my existing skills, and grow personally as well as professionally. I wanted to get familiar with this industry and also wanted to experience a remote working environment as I'd never done that before. It was more than a blessing to have gotten the chance to work from home in the scary situations caused by COVID-19. Moreover, Alep Digital is an international company and I also wanted to experience what it's like to work in a company where people from different parts of the world are working together. I wanted to sharpen my writing skills, creativity and develop my interpersonal skills through this experience.

## 1.4 SWOT Analysis

# **Strengths**

The following are the strengths of Alep Digital:

- It is very relevant in the changing scenarios of the sales industry.
- Alep Digital has experience in building sales teams, creating marketing strategies, and implementing systems and processes.
- The team at Alep have an expertise of over 15 years.
- Alep digital utilizes cutting edge technology and provides superior customer service.
- It provides services to a vast range of industries.
- Alep has a diverse workforce as it outsources talent from different parts of the world.

#### Weaknesses

The following are the weaknesses of Alep Digital:

- Due to lack of physical working environment there is lack of a proper connection and bond among the team members.
- Frequent miscommunications occur due to remote working environment and online communication among the members.

### **Opportunities**

The following are the opportunities for Alep Digital:

- Alep Digital can expand their services to more countries around the world.
- It can collaborate with companies in other different industries to provide more value to its customers and also increase the customer base.
- Alep Digital can build a stronger and diverse employee base from other parts of the world since it is a remote company.

### **Threats**

The following are the threats for Alep Digital:

- There is a threat of security breach and hacking since the majority of the work of the company is done online.
- There is a threat of various new entrants in the same industry.

## 1.5 Objectives of the Study

Brand positioning refers to "arranging for a product to occupy a clear, distinctive, and desirable place in the market and in the minds of the customer" (Dutta, 2016). Marketing communications plays a vital role in how a company wants to position themselves. An organization can use marketing communications in order to educate the audience about their brand as well as develop positive associations through which the customers feel like the brand is the best choice for them (Martinez, 2003). As a content writing intern, I had to create the content for the company's marketing communications. Therefore, I wanted to understand how it directly impacted the company's brand positioning. The major objectives of this report are:

- To understand the importance of brand positioning for a company in an industry where there is a huge consumer behavior change.
- To understand how the content management impacts the company's positioning.

### **Chapter 2: Co-op Study Activities**

My job required me to provide my assistance mainly in the content management department. Besides that, there were some miscellaneous tasks that I provided my support on. Following are the details of the responsibilities that I was assigned with:

### 2.1 Content Management

The main objective was to understand what the brand values of Alep Digital were and produce content accordingly. I was responsible for writing content for the company's website and social media pages keeping in mind the brand image that Alep wanted to portray to the audience. The following are the day-to-day tasks that I did working in this department:

- Creating post copies and creative copies for the company's social media page LinkedIn. Such copies followed the brand guidelines of Alep Digital which included tonality, structure, and content style.
- Editing and refining social media posts.
- Writing content for the company's website rebranding.
- Collaborating with the graphic designer and website handler to create required content.
- Creating advertisement mock-ups which were to be included in the presentation for clients of Alep Digital.
- Writing relevant blog articles for the company's website.

## 2.2 Job Process Diagram

The job process for creating content for the company's website and social media pages started from the marketing manager and content lead. The marketing manager and the content lead discussed and planned the theme for the upcoming content that needed to be posted, for e.g. social media posts and blog posts. Then I created content around the given theme which had to be engaging for the target audience. After that, the creative copies were assigned to the designer to create the designs according to the organization's branding guidelines. Lastly, it was shown to the CEO for approval. If any feedback was to be incorporated, it would be done and then finally the content would get published.

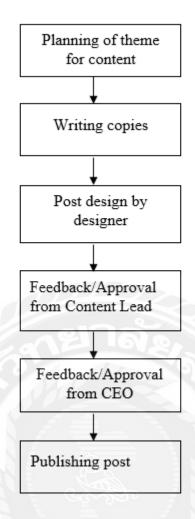


Figure 3: Diagram of my workflow creating content for social media/blog posts

### 2.3 Contribution as an Intern

During a time where fear and uncertainty was rampant, I consider myself extremely lucky to have gotten the opportunity to work in an international company from home. Although I joined as a content writing intern, I also got the chance to give my contribution in other day-to-day works. The introductory phase of the internship consisted of training and education about the industry through my supervisor. I was given certain assignments to hone my skills and understand my work better. I also had to research a lot of information and improve my understanding about the industry as well as the company. Slowly, I was able to take full responsibility for writing posts for social media, bringing up concepts for creative designs, and writing full-fledged articles that were relevant to the company. I was even given access to the company's social media account to publish the posts. I believe that I was able to contribute my creativity and writing skills to the company. Additionally, I also created content for the company's clients such as writing copies for their products, creating emails

for their email campaigns and creating social media advertisements. My contribution also included being a team player and working with my fellow team members in a proper manner.



### **Chapter 3: Learning Process**

## 3.1 Problems of the company

While my internship experience gave me great opportunity for learning new skills, I did encounter a few problems which are as follows:

- Lack of a proper community: I consider myself extremely lucky to have gotten into a company that still operated smoothly despite the COVID-19 crisis. I didn't have to worry about getting out of the house or risking my health and getting infected. It was even nice to work alone and not be distracted by the occasional distractions of the workplace. However, this also turned out to be one of the problems I faced. Because my team members and I didn't work in the physical presence of each other, spending long hours and collaborating only through a computer screen was a bit difficult. Though we connected through video calls and voice calls, there was no face-to-face interaction and communication with the team members. Communication through a computer screen wasn't as effective as sitting together and brainstorming ideas quickly.
- Security concerns: While working from home was quiet and comfortable, working solely from the internet posed a lot of security issues. While working in an office environment wouldn't have established such concerns as sharing documents would be easy, I had to think twice before I shared any documents. I had to take various steps to secure my cloud access just so I wouldn't create a problem with the company data. Moreover, the internet connection could turn out to be quite unstable at times which did cause some disruption in the workflow. Thankfully, I didn't have to go through any incidents that posed a major security threat to the company.
- Miscommunication: Since all the communication happened online there were a couple of times where there was miscommunication in the assigned tasks. One time, my supervisor assigned me a task which I understood differently. Because of this I had to put in the same effort again and redo my work. This could happen in any other office as well however, I felt that working remotely increased the likelihood of this problem occurring even more. Fortunately, my supervisor was very understanding and gave me ample time to properly finish the assigned task.

### 3.2 Learnings

My internship tenure working in the content department at Alep Digital, provided many learnings regarding content management, marketing communication and how it directly impacted the company's positioning.

The content management department dealt with producing content for the company's website, social media and presentations for clients. Producing such content has to strictly abide by the company's brand values. In this report specifically, I have addressed how the company positioned itself as it is a relevantly new company, and it was in a phase of building a proper brand positioning in the market. Marketing communication is a dialogue between the company and its audience. It helps companies create the brand image that they want to portray to their customers. Alep Digital used social media pages, its website, direct marketing and personal selling to communicate with its target audience. I learned how to create content that helped customers not only gain knowledge about the brand but also allowed the company to have a clear and distinct place in the minds of the customer.

I was also able to learn how having a proper company culture, especially one operating remotely, is important to add to its brand image. I got a deeper understanding of what things should be kept in mind while deciding upon the company's culture, how it is beneficial and engaging to the workers, and how having a proper company culture strengthens its brand image.

### 3.3 Comparison of Theoretical vs. Practical Learning

Throughout all the three years spent in KCM, I gathered a lot of theoretical knowledge studying different subjects. During my time at Alep Digital, I was able to apply most of the theoretical knowledge and got to learn the practical use of it. I got to enhance my practical learning using theoretical knowledge. While theoretical knowledge came in handy to understand the assigned work better, my practical learning helped me to achieve my assigned goals from the departments I worked in. I was able to improve my communication skills, understand a remote working environment, build resilience, and also garner other various skills. This couldn't have been possible without all the learning throughout this internship.

The following are all the special skills and knowledge I was able to gain during this internship:

• Communication Skills:

I can definitely feel the changes in my communication skills after having completed my 16-week internship. Working in an organization means working and collaborating with people which gave me a deeper understanding of how to communicate in a workplace. Since I worked in a remote environment, I also got extra knowledge of how to make myself clearer while communicating and reduce miscommunication. From channelling my message to my supervisor, to asking for clarification in case of any misunderstanding, I improved my communication skills greatly. I also understood that there are different people in the organization in different hierarchies. So I was also able to communicate with them in regard to that.

### • Research Skills:

Since I was not familiar with this industry, how SaaS sales worked and the product offerings of my company I had to do a lot of research. I had to produce content related to topics that were completely new to me. Therefore, I had to spend a lot of time researching the industry's best practices, recent news on the industry, competitors of Alep and their content marketing strategies. This whole experience helped me sharpen my research skills and learn what to look for as well as where to find good sources to keep myself updated on the industry related topics.

# • Content writing:

Since I worked in the content management department, I was mostly assigned tasks related to content writing. From writing engaging post copies and creative copies to writing articles on a daily basis, I can say that I have improved my content writing skills. I learned how to write in a way that would engage the targeted audience while also keeping in mind our brand values. I learned the basics of organizing the content and presenting it in a way that would be easily understandable by the audience. Moreover, I also gained knowledge about the strategies in managing and producing content.

### • Importance of brand positioning:

Working at Alep Digital, I was able to gather firsthand learnings when it came to brand positioning. I understood that in order to differentiate your company from the competitors in the market, effective brand positioning is very important. I got to learn the various aspects of brand positioning and how it was implemented at Alep Digital. Firstly, there were standard brand values that were created for the company. Creating such brand values gave an opportunity to the company to be distinct and also convey

what the company is all about to the audience. From who they are, to what they want to achieve, to whom they want to help, everything about the company was defined. For the brand positioning, an internal as well as an external analysis was conducted. When it came to the internal analysis, it was all about the company's people, who they wanted to be seen as and what culture they wanted to promote. As for the external analysis, the market that Alep Digital operated in was analysed and thus the message that the company wanted to deliver was finalized. From having a set number of colours that defined the company to the way they engaged the audience on social media, Alep Digital had strict brand values that aided in its positioning.

Alep Digital has positioned itself as a company that doesn't just care about its revenue generation. It is a company that is invested in its customers' success and it grows when its customers grow. It is a company that not just helps its customers succeed and generate higher revenue, but it also aspires to become a company that will remain a true partner to their customers. Alep Digital definitely has a very strong brand positioning.

• Employee engagement in a remote workplace: I had never worked in a remote workplace before and working at Alep Digital gave me insights about how to maintain a proper engagement among employees in a remote working environment. It is difficult to remain engaged with your team members and collaborate with them effectively just through a computer screen. It can almost feel like there is a lack of camaraderie among the employees. Especially when there are so many colleagues whom I haven't met at all.

However, I learned different strategies for maintaining an engaged workforce when working from home was the case. I understood that even virtually, we can maintain a connection. From daily meetings to having fun peer engagement activities every week, I learned about engaging employees in a remote environment. We also had occasional meetings with the CEO to make us feel like we belonged to the company.

### **Chapter 4: Conclusion**

# 4.1 Summary of the highlights of my Co-op studies at Alep

Although this 16-week internship was done as a partial fulfillment of IBBA in Siam University, I felt like it was more than a course fulfillment procedure. I still remember the first day I started this internship and looking back, I feel like I am a different person, both professionally and personally. Not only did I gather an extensive learning experience during this internship period, but I was also given the opportunity to apply my previous theoretical knowledge learned from the college in the real world.

I was able to gain a lot of knowledge regarding content management, content writing, copywriting and creative writing through this internship and from my supervisor. I was also able to sharpen my research skills, communication skills and interpersonal skills from this experience.

### 4.2 Self-evaluation

I got an internship opportunity in an industry that I previously didn't have much knowledge about. So this internship was a great learning opportunity for me. I was able to grasp the significance of content management, culture and communication in the brand positioning of an organization. I also gained a deeper understanding about how a company functions remotely and the importance of employee engagement in a remote working environment.

To conclude, this internship was an extremely beneficial and fruitful learning experience. It provided me with an abundance of knowledge that I will definitely need in my career in the future. I am extremely grateful to have gotten this opportunity.

### 4.3 Limitations of the Study

Even though my learning at Alep Digital was very fruitful, I did face certain limitations. Though I put in my full effort in handling these limitations, some of them were beyond my control and they resulted in a challenging time. These limitations are as follows:

- Even though we engaged in a video call almost daily, there was a lack of tight-knit camaraderie that makes for truly great teams.
- The time limit of 16 weeks was not enough to gain a whole understanding of a company that provided services in so many industries.

• Because I worked from home and had my working hours scheduled, there were a few times when my productivity wasn't at peak because of distractions at home.

# 4.4 Recommendations to the Company

With the completion of my 16 weeks of internship at Alep Digital, I got a very good chance to understand how the company worked from inside out. Not only did I get to work with the people there, but I also learned about the company culture and the company policies. Because of this, I got an opportunity to analyze the company and give recommendations from my side.

Internship programs help fresh graduates to gain experience of the corporate world for the first time. Having good internship programs in a company can help the company attract fresh talent. This in turn helps interns to gain good experience. I would like to recommend Alep Digital to have an internship program. The internship program should begin with induction so that interns find it easier to adapt to the workplace. The program should be such that it helps the intern to learn about multiple departments and the overall organization through rotation across departments in regular intervals. The company should have a mixture of technical, managerial and creative tasks to make sure that the internship is not monotonous. This would put the company in a good light among fresh graduates.

While the SaaS adoption in India and other countries are growing rapidly, the same is not in the case of Nepal. Nepal has a long way to go when it comes to these kinds of technologies. Though it offers a lot of different kinds of services from eCommerce to security to digital marketing, its services aren't very relevant here in Nepal. It's true that that might be the case because of Nepal being a developing country.

My recommendations include building an even stronger brand image to make sure that the company's services reach out to our country as well. While it is in Alep Digital's plan to hire more and more workers from Nepal and expand, it should also make plans to implement it soon because it would be a great employment opportunity for people from Nepal as the current COVID crisis has left many jobless.

I would also like to recommend the company to implement all the discussed ideas from the employee engagement plan to help employees connect better with each other. Since we are all working from home it gets very difficult sometime to have that sense of belonging and connection. So I recommend the company to not just focus on work and deadlines but also

include activities like informal coffee meetings, storytelling sessions, one to one connect sessions, and many more ideas from the employee engagement plan.

My last recommendation for the company is to have a mentorship program that could really enhance the learning of the newcomers in the workplace. The company can devise a survey to gather information on who are interested in the program and assign mentors and mentees accordingly. This would be an extremely valuable experience for the newcomers. Other than that, the company is doing great in overall terms.



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### Annex

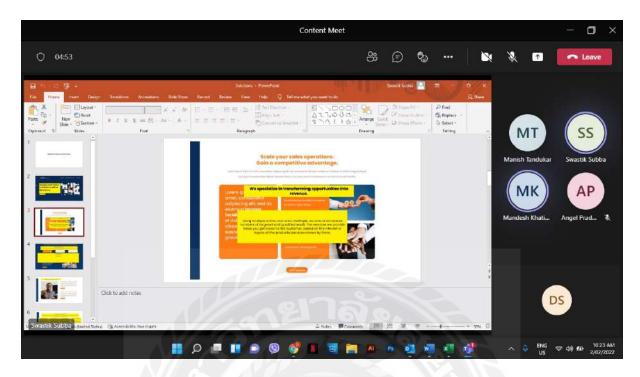


Image 1: Screenshot of daily meeting of Content Team - Discussion of company website rebranding



Image 2: Screenshot of weekly meeting of Nepal Team



Image 3: Screenshot of monthly meeting with the India and Nepal Team

