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**International Journal on Research and Development - A  
Management Review**

ISSN: 2319 - 5479

Volume 15 Issue 01, 2026

**Boomerang Hiring: Zomato's Public Callback to Former Employees**

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Peer Review Information	Abstract
<p>Submission: 13 March 2026 Revision: 0.2 April 2026 Acceptance: 16 April 2026</p>	<p>This case study reviews Zomato's intention to bring back their former employees as part of a broader transformation in its talent management strategy. Looking into publicly available financial disclosures, leadership statements and HR-industry review, we examine how Zomato moved from an impulsive, high-attrition environment to a culture that publicly invites ex-employees back, leveraging their prior organisational knowledge, cultural fit, and external skill enhancement. The case illuminates how re-hiring practices can reduce the high onboarding costs, accelerate performance, and signal cultural maturity, while also arising queries about equity, team dynamics, and long-term retention. The findings contribute to research on agile talent management in online platform-based gig economies and offer practical lessons for HR leaders in dynamic tech firms.</p>
<p><b>Keywords</b></p> <p>Re-hiring practices, agile talent management, Boomerang Hiring</p>	

**Introduction**

In early 2026, Zomato founder and CEO Deepinder Goyal gave an open invitation to former employees to return back to the organization, waving a cautious shift from a "zero-longevity" culture associated with rapid scaling and layoffs to a re-hiring strategy that indulges ex-employees as a resource rather than a past chapter. Over the preceding years, Zomato had undergone multiple rounds of restructuring, including layoffs and automation-driven role-reductions, which generated reputational and morale challenges. By re-opening the door to former staff, Zomato attempts to balance talent scarcity in high-growth tech, preservation of organisational memory, and cultural repair after a turbulent expansion phase. This case focuses on Zomato's 2025-2026 period, during which the company reported stabilising profitability, integrating into its parent-group Eternal, and re-positioning itself as an established, culture-first platform willing to welcome back professionals who had left sometimes after being laid off or asked to exit.

Zomato's recent hiring and existing history (2022-2025)

Between 2022 and 2024, Zomato executed several rounds of job cuts, particularly in customer-support and back-office roles, as automation and AI tools reduced the need for manual interventions; some reports cited over 500 support-related layoffs in one wave. These exits occurred alongside Zomato's IPO(2021) and a broader lean-into asset-light operations, where efficiency and cost-control were prioritized over headcount growth. In 2024-2025, Zomato shifted tone publicly, emphasizing mental-health support, flexible work, and leadership-accountability while signalling a more sustainable growth trajectory. This period created a large cohort of former employees who had experience with Zomato's culture, systems, and crisis-response mechanisms, yet many left with mixed or negative perceptions of workload, leadership, and career paths. In early February 2026, Deepinder Goyal posted publicly on X platform inviting former Zomato employees to rejoin, explicitly addressing those who had left

voluntarily as well as those who had been asked to leave. Goyal's message stated that the company had evolved and matured, and that the door was not closed for anyone who once worked at Zomato, signaling that past exits were not treated as disqualifying events. The invitation was framed as part of Zomato's broader "Zero Probation, Zero Notice Period" philosophy, which de-emphasizes rigid tenure and permits fluid in-and-out movements of talent. Industry and HR-commentary sources note that hundreds of former employees have already re-joined across sales, operations, tech, and product roles since the 2025–2026 re-engagement drive, with some individuals returning multiple times. The re-hiring initiative is not limited to "star" performers; Zomato leadership has indicated openness to bringing back people who were laid off earlier, provided they align with current role requirements. This move places Zomato among the first major Indian tech-platform firms to publicly and systematically embrace defacto-hiring as a core talent-strategy lever, rather than an ad-hoc or reputational patch. Industry and HR-critics highlight several strategic advantages that Zomato appears to be exploiting. Re-hires reportedly reach full productivity in roughly half the time of new external hires, because they already know Zomato's systems, stakeholders, and "way of working". Boomerang employees bring back tacit knowledge of past crises, product-launch learnings, and internal politics, helping newer teams avoid repeating mistakes. Re-hiring known quantities reduces the "risk premium" of hiring strangers in a tight labour market, where background checks and fit-assessments are imperfect. Although not yet formalised as a branded "alumni programme" in public disclosures, Zomato's 2026 strategy exhibits several features of a structured return-to-work programme. Public, CEO-led messages explicitly state that ex-employees are welcome back, regardless of how or why they left. The company indicates willingness to re-hire some who were laid off, implying that past performance- or restructuring-related exits are not treated as permanent disqualification. Goyal's note suggests that returning employees can contribute in any role, city, or capacity that matches current needs, reflecting a portfolio-view of talent rather than a rigid-job-code view. HR-critics emphasise that Zomato is also conscious of re-integration challenges avoiding "favouritism" towards boomerang hires, ensuring fair treatment relative to current staff, and guarding against perceptions that "leaving once you get bored" is the fastest route to promotion.

### **Organisational and cultural implications**

Zomato's public announcement includes an admission that, in earlier years, the company may not have offered the right environment or leadership for some employees. This public accountability is unusual for a founder-led firm and signals a shift toward psychological safety and learning-oriented culture. By inviting back even those who were asked to leave, Zomato communicates that mistakes and mis-fits are not permanent moral judgements, which can increase trust among current employees and enhance employer branding. Media and HR-industry coverage describe Zomato's move as part of a broader trend of boomerang-hiring on the rise in corporate India, where firms are re-examining exits as "timing mismatches" rather than failures. Zomato values evolving leadership, flexibility, and continuous contribution, even if that contribution spans multiple stints.

Current employees may resent seeing former colleagues re-hired quickly or with relaxed assessment criteria, especially if earlier layoffs were painful or perceived as unfair. Over-reliance on familiar faces may reduce exposure to fresh perspectives and different management styles, potentially blunting innovation. Zomato has also been updating internal policies on identity and inclusion (e.g., surname- and pronoun-related changes), which raises questions about how returning employees are aligned with evolving norms and behavioral expectations.

### **Questions**

1. How does Zomato's public invitation to former employees, including those who were laid off to "come back" signal a shift in leadership mindset and organisational culture? What are the potential benefits and risks of treating exits as reversible episodes rather than permanent breaks?
2. If you were Zomato's CHRO, how would you design a formal "boomerang-hire" or alumni-re-entry programme to ensure that re-hiring is fair, effective, and aligned with long-term talent strategy? What policies and safeguards would you put in place to prevent resentment among current employees and maintain performance equity?

### **Discussion Guide**

#### **Question 1**

How does Zomato's public invitation to former employees—including those who were laid off—to "come back" signal a shift in leadership

mindset and organisational culture? What are the potential benefits and risks of treating exits as reversible episodes rather than permanent breaks?

### Case Brief- (Leadership & Culture)

- Zomato, a high-growth food-tech platform, underwent several rounds of layoffs and restructuring in 2022–2024.
- In early 2026, founder Deepinder Goyal publicly invited ex-employees to rejoin, emphasising that the company has matured and that the door remains open even for those who were laid off.
- This move reflects a “boomerang-hiring” or return-to-work strategy where leaving is not treated as a permanent break.

### Expected Responses for Discussion

- Leadership mindset shift:
  - Recognition of past mistakes (layoffs, culture, workload) and taking ownership rather than blaming individuals.
  - Willingness to change and grow as an organisation, signalling learning and humility.
- Cultural signals:
  - Treating employees as long-term relationships rather than one-time assets.
  - Creating psychological safety: people can leave for growth, family, or other roles and return without stigma.
  - Reinforcing a “Zero Probation, Zero Notice Period” view of employment, where joining, leaving, and returning are normal.
- Potential benefits:
  - Faster ramp-up and lower onboarding cost for re-hires who already know Zomato’s systems and culture.
  - Preservation of organisational memory from past crises and product-launches.
  - Stronger employer branding and candidate-pool quality (people see Zomato as fair and growth-oriented).
- Potential risks / challenges:
  - Perceived inequity: current employees may feel that returning ex-staff get preferential treatment or faster promotions.
  - Legacy issues: returning employees may carry old conflicts, outdated norms, or resistance to recent changes.
  - Ethical questions: re-hiring laid-off employees can raise doubts about the

fairness and reasoning of earlier decisions.

- Further discussion :
- Linking founder statements to leadership and culture.
- Balancing positive outcomes (agility, trust) with negative risks (fairness, resentment).

### Question 2 – Discussion Guide (HR Strategy & Design)

#### Question:

If you were Zomato’s CHRO, how would you design a formal “boomerang-hire” or alumni-re-entry programme to ensure that re-hiring is fair, effective, and aligned with long-term talent strategy? What policies and safeguards would you put in place to prevent resentment among current employees and maintain performance equity?

#### Case Brief

- Zomato has shown interest in re-hiring former employees, but currently the approach is more informal and message-driven.
- As CHRO, you must institutionalise this into a formal alumni-re-entry programme that is fair, transparent, and performance-linked.
- Expected Responses for discussion:
- Programme design elements:
  - Eligibility criteria: e.g., past performance ratings, reason for exit, time since last employment, and alignment with current role needs.
  - Alumni talent database: maintain updated profiles, skills, and interests of ex-employees.
  - Structured re-entry process: preliminary screening, interviews, and role-fit assessment, just like new hires.
  - Exit-return tracking: record who left, why they returned, and how they performed to refine future decisions.
- Policies and safeguards:
  - No automatic advantages: re-hires must go through evaluation; no bypassing interviews or probation-like checks.
  - Transparent communication: explain to current teams why re-hires are brought back, focusing on skills, role-criticality, and business needs.
  - Fair onboarding-re-integration: provide refresher training on updated systems, culture, and policies; assign mentors/buddies.

- Performance-linked rewards: ensure bonuses, promotions, and recognition are benchmarked against current employees, not treated as “special” for returning staff.

### Strategic alignment

- Treat alumni as a talent pipeline for future growth phases (e.g., new markets, product launches).
  - Track outcomes: ramp-up time, retention, engagement, and performance of re-hires vs. new hires.
  - Use the programme to reinforce employer branding externally (people can grow elsewhere and return if they choose).
- Further discussions:
- Propose a structured, measurable programme (not just “give them a chance”).
- Address fairness, transparency, and integration explicitly.
- Connect the programme to broader HR strategy and metrics.

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