



“Energy reduction is a priority”

Dr Ravi Damodaran, President - Technology & Strategy, Varroc Group of Companies, believes that to stay competitive, a company needs to achieve a certain scale for introducing better technologies. In his interview with Megha Roy, he discusses the need to come up with advanced technologies to enable effective automation in Indian manufacturing industry

Your company was recently awarded with the best excellence in cost award from Mahle Behr India Limited. What would you attribute this success to?

Our manufacturing excellence program is driven by the TPM practices and over the years, we have been increasing our capacity for building excellence culture amongst our employees. This award is an appreciation of the efforts by our employees.

Given that Varroc’s each core business strives to improve environmental performance, what are your future plans in this context?

Our focus is on products that are light, green and safe. Our product strategies have been driven by these megatrends and we have continuously been exploring greener ways of generating energy required for our businesses. Today, a significant portion of our energy needs are met by wind and solar power. Going forward, we intend to look into energy reduction as a focus area in our manufacturing process design too.

What are the best manufacturing practices implemented in your company that help achieve competitive excellence?

We have been open to sourcing technologies from the



international arena, but at the same time, we do conduct a careful analysis of the suitability and adaptability of these technologies to our manufacturing practices. This has enabled us to ply with the advantages of advanced technologies that drive productivity and quality with lower cost and local practices that help us in being competitive.

What are the significant technological trends in the automotive manufacturing industry? Do you wish to see any breakthrough innovations in future?

Automotive industry is a volume driven industry. As such, there is a need to achieve a certain scale before a company can afford to introduce better technologies to stay competitive. Due to the fragmented nature of this industry at the tier 1 and tier 2 levels, the necessary injection of technologies is absent. While breakthrough innovations such as smart manufacturing (use of the internet in running factories) are being discussed in Germany, the need for India is still at basic levels in terms of achieving world class productivity and quality. Even in the near future, this industry should take up energy management and complete systems engineering while continuing to drive lean manufacturing practices leading to effective automation.

Manufacturing enterprises, big & small, today, have increasing focus on optimising performance, productivity and asset management as well as an effective technology management. How is Varroc's approach towards this?

We look out for trends in product and process technologies that impact our business in the future. This also identifies advanced technologies and practices that we will depend on to supplement our processes today and give us an edge into the

CANDID SEVEN

- **If not in the automotive industry, where would you be?**
Up in the hills, farming and creating a sustainable ecosystem for the community
- **What is your favourite pastime?**
Listening to music and watching old sports clips
- **What are you currently reading?**
History, travel writing
- **Which car you are driving currently?**
Skoda Superb
- **Which is your dream car?**
Rolls Royce
- **Your dream holiday destination?**
Anywhere in Kerala
- **One thing that people don't know about you?**
I interviewed for a high school teacher's position and was refused that position



future. We also have a well-defined strategic planning process that envisages technology and talent management as the key pillars for the future.

Where do you see the Indian manufacturing heading to, especially in the background of frequent ups & downs in the economic cycle?

The frequent ups and downs have a lot to do with our lack of belief in the local economies, which forces us to look outward and hence drive our policies for favouring exports. We should work to stimulate manufacturing to become competitive in the domestic market, which will consequently drive exports. Thus, unless the manufacturing community decides to collaborate for improving productivity and quality by investing in technology and talent for domestic market, and the government drives investments in creating better infrastructure; we will continue to see such ups and downs.

What is your agenda for the year 2014-2015?

We plan to continue to proliferate our entire product range into all of our targeted growth customers, tighten our quality, cost and delivery performance and develop technologies in select product ranges to differentiate ourselves in the two wheeler market as well as prepare to penetrate the passenger car market in select product ranges. □

> [MORE@CLICK EM01345](mailto:MORE@CLICKEM01345) | www.efficientmanufacturing.in