

PROPELLING AHEAD

A HEALTHY CORPORATE STRATEGY AND EXCELLENT EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IS DRIVING RSB TRANSMISSIONS (I) LTD EVEN DURING DIFFICULT TIMES, SAYS RK BEHERA, ITS CHAIRMAN

BY NIRANJAN MUDHOLKAR

With a huge focus on commercial vehicles, the market has been quite difficult for RSB Transmissions (I) Ltd in the recent times. But RK Behera, the chairman of the group, is definitely not in the mood to give up. In fact, this first generation entrepreneur sees this as an opportunity build capabilities and move up the value chain. “We have already established ourselves as a tier-2 supplier. Now we want to become a full-fledged tier-1 company by 2020. Accordingly, we are fine-tuning our processes and enhancing our capacities,” he says.

Behera believes the evolution in the value chain should begin in the mind-set first before we even talk about capabilities and capacities. “See, we are a component manufacturer or a system manufacturer. We supply the product as per the customer’s order and that could be the end of the story. On the contrary, it actually starts there for us. We have to understand the challenges faced by the OEMs and come up with solutions to address them comprehensively,” he says.

Accordingly, RSB is already going that extra mile by engaging – believe it or not – the fleet owners and drivers, who are the customers of RSB’s clients. “We go to the field and speak directly to the end-users to understand their requirements and pain-points. This feedback is incorporated in the product design. The idea is to become a partner with the OEM.”

The efforts are already paying off. Not only has this given RSB a good footing in the aftermarket, it has also helped change the approach of OEMs. “Earlier, they would provide the design and we had to simply manufacture it. But now, we partner with them right from the design process.” Call it reverse engineering or customer orientation, Behera, who started the business with a mere Rs.15,000/- borrowed from his father, knows when to change gears for his business.

It’s perhaps a coincident that RSB has been manufacturing gears for more than twenty years now. “Climbing up the value chain would also mean graduating from being a component player to being an aggregate maker. For example, from being a gear manufacturer, we are aiming to be a manufacturer of



RSB's plants follow the continuous improvement philosophy

gearboxes,” he says. Of course, this would require investments to enhance capabilities and Behera is not afraid of doing that if it is essential. But he wants to do it one step at a time.

Similarly, he is also open to extend the portfolio through the inorganic way. RSB is already exploring opportunities in Europe as well as other developing countries. Another way is collaborating with established players in targeted segments for acquiring the technical know-how. For example, RSB recently signed a technical know-how agreement with Fontaine 5th Wheel, UK, to manufacture and sell fifth wheel coupling for domestic market under the brand name RSB-Fontaine and export to Fontaine, UK.

In fact, RSB has successfully adopted the method of collaborating for technical know-how, in the past, in the propeller shaft product segment. To enhance its in-house technical capabilities, the company joined hands with Eugen Klein, a Germany-based manufacturer to acquire the design, technology as well as knowledge of processing and testing in that product segment.

“Of course, we did not stop at just acquiring the knowledge. “We further enhanced it by adopting it to suit the market conditions in India,” says Behera. The result? Today, propeller shaft is a proprietary product in RSB’s kitty with the company becoming a vertically integrated solution provider in the segment having the biggest share in the domestic market.

“We want to have many more proprietary products in our portfolio. And that also means that we need to have a strong design and development team,” says Behera. With this objective, RSB established I-Design, its full-fledged R&D wing in 2002. As a full cycle product development unit with capabilities across functions like designing, prototyping and testing, I-Design also caters to other companies besides addressing the needs of RSB. By working for other market players, I-Design has been able to add immensely to its knowledge bank and thus in turn widened RSB’s horizon.

We believe this initiative will help us take the big leap and according we have invested in it. Today, we have more than 150



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The Sanaswadi plant has installed the rotary furnace that not only saves time and cost but also ensures better quality.

ABOUT THE RSB GROUP

Headquartered in Pune, Maharashtra, the RSB group includes four different companies, namely, RSB Transmissions (I) Ltd., RSB Transmissions North America Inc, I-Design Engineering Solutions Ltd. and Ivitesse Technologies Pvt. Ltd. It has 10 manufacturing facilities, including seven in India and one each in US, Mexico and Belgium.

The group operates in two verticals, namely automotive and CMI (construction, mining & infrastructure) equipment and aggregates. Its customers include key Indian and global OEMs.

In the automotive segment, it is a leading global manufacturer of propeller shaft systems and components, a wide range of axles, fully finished gears, shafts, hubs & sleeves and transmission components.

In the CMI segment, it manufactures heavy fabrications and aggregates like frames, arms, booms and buckets.



engineers working on various engineering disciplines like mathematical modelling, engineering design, process engineering, instrumentation and control engineering, product validation, data acquisition, material science and so on,” he adds.

The other parallel activity towards adding the number of proprietary products in the basket has been that of setting up an independent technology centre for each of its product. These tech centres will design, validate and collaborate with customers to enhance the product quality and performance. “We want to be future-ready and we will not spare any effort towards making

this happen. Initiatives like I-Design and tech centres are steps towards transforming the organisation from being just an engineering company to become a multi-disciplinary firm,” says Behera.

RSB’s chairman also wants to ensure that the company has a robust, strategic framework. Rajnikant Behera, VP – corporate strategy & finance & member of board, who heads this initiative believes that agility will drive leadership in a dynamic market. “We are strengthening our core competencies and fine-tuning our mind-sets as well as capabilities. With PwC, we have charted out a clear strategic outlook for the next five years,” he says.



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Courtesy Optomec Inc.

EFESTO is a high energy enterprise committed to engineering an industrial revolution in the field of 3D printing of metals and metal composites. EFESTO has been formed under its parent company, Vania Services LLC, which has a stellar record of developing and delivering advanced manufacturing solutions and services into the global industrial marketplace. The name EFESTO is inspired and derived from Hephaestus, the Greek God of fire, technology, engineering, sculpture and metallurgy.

EFESTO’s vision is centric to a laser sharp focus on creativity, innovation and continuous improvement. It will develop and deliver market driven solutions including a comprehensive range of standalone, turnkey and automated 3D metal printing systems for desktop, laboratory, factory and large scale field deployment. It will also launch innovative business models, including long term services partnering arrangements with select customers, allowing the user and EFESTO to jointly profit from the use of EFESTO’s solutions.

EFESTO’s mission is to exponentially increase the awareness and acceptance of 3D metals printing technology by delivering compelling value and unparalleled customer satisfaction as it serves its users with robust, reliable and best-in-class solutions that meet and exceed any viable application requirement. Target markets include aerospace, defense, marine, automotive, energy, heavy machinery, tooling, die & mold, and academia. Target applications include repair and repair services, remanufacturing, rapid manufacturing and research.

EFESTO’s founders and management comprise of a remarkable team of industry thought leaders, seasoned entrepreneurs and business development professionals. The team possesses more than 120 years of collective experience in advanced manufacturing and additive manufacturing industries, together with strong relationships and deep access in the American, European and Asian markets. EFESTO has an innovative and aggressive strategy for organic and acquisitive growth, and is building several full service locations and strategic partnerships around the globe. It is incorporated near Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA as a Limited Liability Company with Vania Services LLC as its majority shareholder, and is building state of the art facilities as its Corporate Headquarters with a fully equipped R&D center, show room, and manufacturing operations. Efesto is also a close business partner and external distribution channel for Optomec Inc’s Laser Engineered Net Shaping (LENS®) systems and services.

EFESTO’s credo can be identified with the philosophy: **“Today EFESTO will do what others won’t, so that tomorrow our customers can do what others can’t”**

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What we do

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3D Metal Printing using Laser Engineered Net Shaping (LENS®)
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- Support**
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- Applications**
Repair, Prototyping, Rapid Manufacturing, R&D
- Industries**
Aviation, Space, Defense, Energy, Mining, Construction, Marine, Automotive, Tooling, Academia
- Markets**
Global



RSB is focussing on both quality and on-time delivery.

Agility will drive leadership position in a dynamic market. Accordingly, we are fine-tuning our mind-sets and capabilities.”

Rajnikant Behera, VP, corporate strategy & finance; member of board



product-new customer, new product-existing customer and new product-new customer,” Rajnikant says.

Another area that RSB is reinforcing itself is that of human resources. So there has been a huge focus on training and development, which comes with a properly defined approach. “Our people development programme is a blend of corporate strategies and human values that aligns performance with business goals,” says Nirmala Behera Udgata, head, corporate HR. Behera Udgata believes it is important to take a holistic approach to this issue.

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Staff members in the corporate office as well as the shopfloor are not referred to as workers but as ‘associates’. “We believe they are partners in our progress,” says Behera Udgata, who has adopted the Adizes Methodology for the HR initiatives. “A growing organisation, particularly the one which is making a big transition, faces unique set of challenges.

Its success depends on the way these challenges are addressed in the context of the changes made. This is where the Adizes Methodology has been helping us,” she says. For its ten facilities spread across the country, RSB has a programme to develop behavioural aspects linking the family, work and society to the individual.

Another key feature of RSB’s HR initiative has been its appraisal system for its associates. “Rather than simply judging the performance of the associates at the end of year, we first provide them with set goals at the beginning. The second step is to facilitate them towards reaching these objectives. The third step is to analyse their performance vis-à-vis the targets given to them. The idea is to bring in more accountability with the sense of responsibility,” Behera Udgata explains.

Thus, with a comprehensive game-plan in place, RK Behera, the chairman of the group is all set to lead RSB to its level of growth. For a man who made a humble beginning at Jamshedpur by following what he calls the ‘JRD culture’ (referring to JRD Tata), RK Behera has indeed come a long way. A sense of achievement is certainly there, but it is clearly overwhelmed by the sense of aspiration and ambition. ■

Rajnikant understands that the markets may continue to be volatile even in the times to come. “We want to de-risk the organisation in the face of uncertainty both in terms of geography as well as products. Conventionally, RSB has been more focussed on commercial vehicles, particularly in the medium and heavy duty segments. While it has started catering to the passenger car segment in the recent times, it is also reaching out to the farm equipment manufacturers. Then, it is also exploring opportunities in newer geographies. “Basically, we will be hedging ourselves in the context of the BCG Matrix – existing product-existing customer, existing