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“The Indian manufacturing sector is heading towards a major facelift”

...says Marc Jarrault, Managing Director, Lapp India, who in this interview with Maria Jerin, discusses Lapp India's journey so far upon completing 20 years and the steps that the company is taking to implement a planned Industry 4.0 journey in India. Excerpts from the interview...

How do you trace back the journey of Lapp India in the last 20 years? What do you attribute this success to?

Foreseeing the potential of the Indian market in terms of rapid growth in infrastructure and industrialisation, Lapp entered the Indian market as a trading company in 1996. By the year 1998, they set up their first manufacturing unit in Jigani, Bangalore. Post this, we started working on our second manufacturing plant in Pilukedi, Bhopal, which produces more than 216,000 km of single core wires per annum, catering mainly to the building wire segment.

Today, Lapp in India provides about 150,000 km per year of power, control, instrumentation and data cables along with connectors, accessories and customised cabling solutions, to over 7,000 customers across India. What's more, Lapp in India is the second largest operations of Lapp outside of Germany.

Our success can be attributed to our understanding of customer requirements and being able to provide both global and local products and solutions to meet these requirements. Our approach of providing application-based solutions helps us to address the key segments driving the growth of the country. We also attribute our success to Lapp's employees, who work towards making us a preferred

partner for cable and connectivity solutions for all our stakeholders.

According to you, what are the megatrends that are driving disruption across the industry globally? How do you foresee these trends in India?

Industry 4.0 is in harmony with worldwide initiatives, including smart factories, IIoT, Smart Manufacturing, and advanced manufacturing. This revolution in the manufacturing landscape is changing continuously across boundaries.

With this revolution, the Indian manufacturing sector seems to be heading towards a major facelift now, in which IIoT and Smart Manufacturing are playing a vital role. So Indian manufacturing has come a long way by adapting and implementing IIoT and creating smart factories with robots and advanced computer systems. IIoT is helping the manufacturing sector transform its business by applying industry-leading analytics and intellectual capabilities that can help improve the quality of operations, optimisation and uptime from production till the final stage. IIoT has also opened several avenues for manufacturers by integrating analytics into their systems for better results with high and quality output.

What are the major challenges faced by the industry? How does your company address these challenges?

The search is on for sophisticated, tailored solutions in the industry, from production to testing and delivery of projects at a manufacturing end. To support these objectives, manufacturing companies are keen to quickly produce quality connectivity solutions. We put our products through their paces in the company's own laboratory and test facility in order to ensure that they meet the customers' high expectations. We even test the first samples thoroughly and therefore, the customer can be confident that the solution is the right one, with the danger of costly downtimes of production equipment reduced to a minimum.





Marc Jarrault completed his MBA from INSEAD in France. He is a French Foreign Trade Advisor and has in-depth knowledge of the manufacturing industry acquired from senior leadership roles held in various MNCs. He has also managed large construction projects (pipeline, cement plant, power plant) and championed health and safety and sustainable development.

Tell us about the steps you are taking to implement a strategised Industry 4.0 transition in India.

Industry 4.0 would demand data, power supply and pneumatics in one connector to significantly reduce the retrofit times of a modular production plant. Reliable networking of production across all levels will only be possible with a comprehensive cabling and connection concept. Ethernet cables in a production environment must be substantially more robust than LAN cables in an office environment.

We cater to this increasing demand of Industry 4.0. The focus lies on developing solutions that are designed with data cables that ensure minimal loss of data. The slim design of the components manufactured by Lapp enables robustness with high flexibility that is best suitable to manage torsion, reeling and unreeling.

Can you brief us on the current scenario and the market potential in India for wires and cables? What is your outlook on the future growth prospects in this sector?

The wire and cable industry is highly competitive, with few organised players in the market, all trying to capture a major portion. A high level of consolidation has led to an increased pressure on pricing and promotion. In the coming years, with consumers becoming more sensitive, manufacturers will be seen providing products by anticipating the consumer needs in advance and broadening the appeal of the product to suit various needs. Also, products with superior technologies will continue to find a deeper penetration in the Indian wires and cables market.

Sectors such as infrastructure, metro, metals and mining, and automation power plants (nuclear & thermal) contribute to the growth of India. Lapp has a significant marketshare for control, power and data products in these industries. According to a recent research done by TechSci Research, India, insulated wire and cable market has been predicted to grow at a CAGR

of 10.3% through 2023, predominantly on account of growing government investments towards infrastructure development projects. We aim to capitalise on this and contribute to the Indian growth story.

Going forward, what is your roadmap for Lapp in India?

Our vision for India is to reach a turnover of Rs 1000 crores in the next 4 years. We plan to increase our active customer base and also strengthen our presence in key segments, driving the growth of the country.

When it comes to retail, we want to increase our base from the current 5 cities to 20 cities in the next 4 years. This would ensure that we are not only seen as a prominent player in the retail market, but would also ensure that we are where our customers are.

We will set up more warehouses and build service points in order to provide them with better service. We are further looking at offering our customers the convenience to buy online and expanding our production capacity in Jigani and Bhopal plants, which will help us enlarge our market offering by being a one stop electro-technical solution provider for India.

What is your approach to organisational change management so as to build a culture of operational excellence?

We focus on job rotation and continuous vocational training at all levels so as to build greater understanding of business and hence, be able to deliver operational excellence. We have developed a global skills model in support of this. Among other areas, this is implemented in the context of succession planning, further training and talent promotion. With this approach to organisational change, we have managed to become a segment driven rather than concentrating regionally. We are now centralised more on developing tailored solutions for every industrial segment, align ourselves with market needs and meet challenges. □



THE WIRE AND CABLE INDUSTRY IS HIGHLY COMPETITIVE, WITH FEW ORGANISED PLAYERS IN THE MARKET