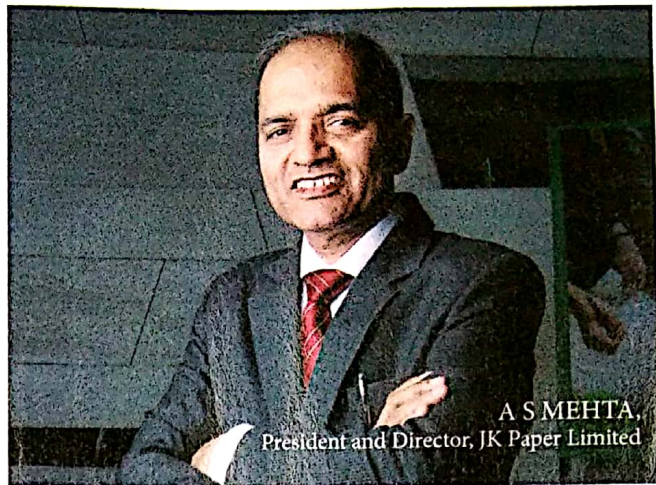


Keeping faith in people, CHALKING NEW SUCCESSES

A good engineer is a person who can sense a machine not by touching but by hearing and walking around it," says 58 year old A S Mehta, President and Director, JK Paper Limited, who is credited with having transformed the company. As against Indian paper industry growth of around 6% to 7%, the Company has been recording higher growth through focus on improved operational efficiency, value added products and new product development.



From a Rs 1500 crore turnover Company having a net profit of around Rs 49 crore when Mehta took charge in 2011, the company today has a turnover of around Rs 3000 crore and net profit of around Rs 300 crore. Unwilling to take credit for the leap in JK Papers profits, Mehta modestly states it has all been good team work and a number of factors and processes.

A non-technical person, who was trained to handle finance, Mehta claims to understand people. "Once I have the right kind of people, I trust and fully empower them by giving them elbow room to operate but set the barometer and the targets," says Mehta, who has held various portfolios in JK Tyre before moving to JK Paper.

Mehta began his career as a Chartered Accountant with ONGC, through campus placement but quit after a year as he felt he was not adding any great value to the organisation as it already had an established culture and way of working. He joined PG Foils, a small Rajasthan based aluminium foil manufacturing company, due to personal commitments. After a good innings of nearly two years, during which he set up the system and created all the processes, he joined JK Tyre in 1986 and worked as an accountant at its plant in Kankroli, Rajasthan.

After nine years in the post, he started slowly rising up in ranks to become Head of Commercial at the plant, then took over as General Manager, Corporate Finance. After various other roles, Mehta made a switch from Accounts to Marketing when he took over as Marketing Director in 2007. In 2011, after over four years stint as Head of Marketing and Sales at JK Tyre, he was given charge of JK Paper. The transition was not too difficult, as Mehta knew all the people including the top-level executives. Moreover, he was a trusted man of the Promoter family, which is why he was given the chance. It took time to understand the product and the Paper market. Beyond that, things were smooth "as ultimately all businesses are the same as we are in business to make money for the stakeholders. So, the objective has to be to produce the best of products at the least of cost and sell at the right price" says Mehta, who has currently been

taken over as the President of the Indian Paper Manufacturers Association (IPMA). Plantation being the lifeline of a Paper Industry, Mehta decided to first focus on this crucial area after taking charge. Mehta recalls that when he first met the Plantation team he was told that they never had one to one discussion with anyone from the management team let alone the President of the Company. Mehta initiated changes in the plantation practices. From 4,000 hectares a year, the plantation size was rapidly expanded. The first target was to raise it to 10,000 hectares by 2013 and thereafter to 15,000 hectares by 2015. Both the plantation targets have been successfully achieved with the average for last five years being 15,000 hectares plantation every year. This has been achieved with the help of large number of farmers who are encouraged to undertake plantation through a buy back arrangement, with the company providing saplings and other agro advisory services. The present scenario is a vast improvement from 2011-12, when the company suffered greatly due to shortage of raw material.

Alongside plantation work in several States besides Odisha, the company under Mehta's helm also focused on commissioning new machinery to double the plant capacity. From 2.90 lakh tonnes in 2011, the company's current production capacity is 4.55 lakh tonnes per annum.

The company has Two Plants in operation while another one has been added through acquisition. The recently acquired Sirpur Paper Mills, the integrated Pulp and Paper Mill, is undergoing overhaul as it has been shut since September 2014. Once the plant is in operation, it will take the total company production capacity to 5.95 lakh tonnes.

A deeply spiritual person, Mehta begins his day with prayers. Despite his busy schedule, he spares time for mentoring talented youth. Besides this, a man grounded with roots, he has been a caring father, husband, son and above all a fantastic leader.

Five years from now, Mehta's goal is to raise JK Paper's capacity to 10 lakh tonnes, making it the top company of the country. He is also working on a succession plan, as has been his practice before moving on from any position.