

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

POLYMERS

Vol. 21, Issue 5 • December 2020 - January 2021 • Rs 75

GROWING WITH PRIDE
THE RISE OF
GOURAV LUMINARIES

NETTING IT RIGHT
GTFL'S APPLICATION
FOCUSED STRATEGY

SCALING UP DREAMS
DEMAND PUSHES
RUBBER INDUSTRY

PLAYING IT
RIGHT

INDIAN TOY MANUFACTURING
IS ALL SET FOR HUGE GROWTH,
SAYS FUNSKOOL INDIA'S CEO R. JESWANT



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Customer oriented engineering

While technological innovations are prevalent in most aspects of our daily life, Industry 4.0 in packaging industry makes enterprise activities to be more data driven, says **Ajay Tandon**, President - Engineering & New Product Development, UFlex

By Niranjan Mudholkar

What has been the vision behind UFlex' engineering business and how has it evolved over the years since its inception?

The philosophy of UFlex as a whole has been to be a one-stop-shop for comprehensive flexible packaging solutions. The vision of the engineering business is in line with it, by manufacturing the widely used machines to make flexible packaging materials and for packaging of products.

The growth of our Engineering Business is geared by innovation backed practice that matches the customers' packaging requirements. Our success can be attributed to unparalleled guidance from the leadership, teamed with trust and respect for people. This is accompanied by sharp focus on new product developments and continuous improvement while keeping the customer-centric approach in mind.

Tell us about your R&D activities. How important is innovation in your journey?

No industry can become or remain in leadership position for a long time without new product developments and innovations. New product developments and their introduction backed by innovative ideas will always continue to be our business focus. We consider it as one of the prime factors for maintaining our strong position in the industry. Our engineers and development team spends copious amount of time finding out and working on what could be the future needs of the customers, including working on the import



“WE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN COGNIZANT OF THE FACT THAT SUSTAINABILITY WILL BE THE WAY FORWARD FOR ANY BUSINESS TO SURVIVE AS WELL AS THRIVE.”

substitutes and creating engineering marvels. With our customers laying a lot of emphasis on products that not only offers them convenience but also improves their quality of life, the focus at our end is to improve the quality, accuracy and productivity of our machines and offer value for money. Innovations and new ideas keep us on our toes and help us grow with changing times.

In case of flexible packaging materials, key factors that get considered for innovation are strengthening of barrier properties, safety of products packed, customer convenience in handling and using the package, the attraction / appeal of the pack, embed anti-counterfeit features wherever required and above all, the technology that helps reduce Mixed Plastic Laminate (MPL) waste. In case of machines related to flexible packaging, advancements are more in the realm of overall quality, reliability, efficiency, new features, automation and machines with higher

speeds giving higher productivity, meeting the Industry 4.0 norms.

What differentiation have the machines developed by the UFlex Engineering Business brought to the plastic recycling ecosystem in India as well as globally?

Our Engineering Business is determined to develop path-breaking technologies that are all set to give an experience of convenience and enhanced efficiency to its customers. World over it has been debated whether Mixed Plastic Laminate (MPL) can be recycled. We have proved that recycling of MPL is very much possible. The recycling machine developed by the company comes with a technology that recycles all types of MPL bags, carry bags etc. homogeneously into granules without the need to separate layers of plastic films. These granules can further be converted into thousands of useful moulded products like outdoor furniture, paver tiles,

buckets, crates, flower pots and as well put to use to mould industrial items. We have been demonstrating this process and technology to different stakeholders including consumer brands and government and have got an overwhelming response from the industry to convert post-consumer waste into valuable commodities. Our plant in Noida even has a recycling infrastructure that uses many of our recycling machines doing recycling of industrial and post-consumer plastic films and laminate bags waste, collected from Delhi-NCR.

How has the Covid-19 pandemic impacted the way people perceive packaging? And how are you responding to the same?

COVID-19 had brought various industries to a screeching halt and impacted the world economy substantially. But as one would agree, during an epidemic, the consumption levels for essential commodities such as food and medicines increases due to fear-mongering and hoarding of stocks. The packaging manufacturers that cater to these essential industries of FMCG and Pharmaceuticals had to work round the clock to meet these demands. We also saw that this pandemic led to an increased demand for packaged products due to the safety and hygiene parameter that packaging brings. The upsurge in demand therefore made it essential for our business to keep up with the requirements. Similar was the situation of increased requirements of packaging and converting machines.

At UFlex, we have put in enormous efforts to contribute to the fight against this challenging situation and were able to get necessary permissions in place right at the start of the lockdown. We continued our operations non-stop to ensure constant movement of essential items' supply chain, such that there was no



“PACKAGING HAS TRULY BEEN A BELLWETHER OF THE ECONOMY AND OF CONSUMPTION IN APPLICATION FOR FOOD, SAFETY AND PHARMA DURING THESE TOUGH TIMES.”

shortage of packaging materials for packed products for public at large. All of this was backed with adoption of safety measures advised by the government.

I am happy to see that packaging has truly been a bellwether of the economy and of consumption in application for food, safety and pharma during these tough times.

How's been the ongoing fiscal in terms of business performance and how would compare it with the previous fiscal?

We are having a successful financial year 20-21 so far which is evident from our latest financial results of Q2FY21:

- The highest ever quarterly production & sales volumes at 118,470 MT & 111,645 MT
- Turnover of Rs.2234.5 crore. Consolidated revenue rose by 19.2 percent YoY.
- EBITDA: Rs.472.9 crore. 69.6 percent increase on a YoY basis.
- Net Profit jumping YoY by 136 percent to INR 221.8 crore.

Several Indian manufacturing sectors are at the forefront when it comes to the implementation of

Industry 4.0 tools like digitisation and automation. Where does the packaging industry stand in this regard, and what is UFlex doing on this front?

While technological innovations are prevalent in most aspects of our daily life, Industry 4.0 in packaging industry makes enterprise activities to be more data driven. Automation is being increasingly used to process large amounts of data, provide trends and mark out the outliers. To adapt itself to Industry 4.0 norms, Engineering Business has been launching Industrial Internet of Things (IIOT) enabled converting machines like our top of the line extrusion coating and lamination machine designed with high line speed of 400 meters per minute (mpm) to handle thin and thick laminate; solventless laminator machine and gearless CI flexo printing press with high automation level in the form of sleeves, anilox removal system and efficient ink washing system, making UFlex the first ever Indian company to offer it.

Industry 4.0 is largely about making the packaging industry sustainable with the help of technology and data. As one of the leading companies in the packaging sector across

THE COMPANY IS EXPANDING ITS GLOBAL FOOTPRINT FURTHER WITH NEW PACKAGING FILM PLANTS TO BE STARTED IN HUNGARY AND NIGERIA.

the world, we have always been cognizant of the fact that sustainability will be the way forward for any business to survive as well as thrive.

What is your approach as a machinery supplier? On an average, how many machines does UFlex install every year?

Bespoke machinery solutions have been our endeavour always and we ensure that we create or modify our machines to suit what the customers ask, without compromising on quality. Last couple of years we have been selling and installing big and small machines in domestic and export markets ranging from 350 to 400 numbers each year. This financial year 2020-21, we are targeting to install at least 450 machines.

Tell us about your overall manufacturing capabilities and capacities.

UFlex is engaged in providing end-to-end flexible packaging solutions to customers and is the only fully vertically integrated company in India in this space. Incorporated within its core business profile of flexible packaging materials and packaging films are allied businesses like Engineering, Cylinders, Holography, Chemicals and Aseptic Liquid Packaging. The company has world class manufacturing facilities for packaging business in India with installed capacity of around 1,35,000 TPA and packaging film manufacturing facilities in India, UAE, Mexico, Egypt, Poland, USA and Russia with a cumulative production capacity that stands in excess of 4,52,600 TPA. The company is expanding its global footprint further with new packaging film plants to be started in Hungary and Nigeria.

UFlex has a strong global sales and distribution network with customers in about 140 countries. We have a highly experienced leadership and management team with long association, almost since inception with a proven track record and we also employ over 8300 trained and skilled persons globally.

The engineering business has a very flexible capacity to manufacture packaging, converting and recycling machines and has a large avant-garde plant in Noida, India. It all depends on the type, size and the kind of machine orders generated. We also manufacture Aseptic Liquid Filling Machines and special purpose packaging machines that cater to both FMCG as well as Pharma customers.

What is your take on our PM's 'Make in India' initiative? What are the challenges and opportunities for your industry in this context?

The packaging industry plays a crucial role, adding value to various manufacturing sectors including agriculture, pharma, retail, FMCG, to name a few. We are proud to say that UFlex started the very first Indian aseptic liquid packaging plant in Gujarat echoing 'Make in India' vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. His vision of a 'Self-Reliant India' (Atmanirbhar Bharat) and

“INDUSTRY 4.0 IS LARGELY ABOUT MAKING THE PACKAGING INDUSTRY SUSTAINABLE WITH THE HELP OF TECHNOLOGY AND DATA.”

'Vocal for Local' campaign can really help boost manufacturing, and as a result, help scale our economy to newer heights. Overall, the initiatives taken are in sync with the needs of our nation. As an industry, we request the policymakers to provide an enabling environment which gives rise to the demand for locally produced commodities that can match global quality standards. On the other hand the industry and industrialists in our country should think 'big' and put up 'big' manufacturing facilities, like our neighbouring country. This of course needs to be backed up by the government to ensure infrastructure and resources being made available quickly and be affordable to compete internationally.

Also, it's high time that the packaging industry in India should have a 'Central Government recognised executive authority' that regulates the industry, which, for now, is governed by other departments. Reforms and incentives on waste management enforced by regulatory bodies are needed to balance the packaging movement and create a circular economy.

Do we have an ecosystem that is robust enough to become 'Atmanirbhar' as far as this industry is concerned?

Complying with 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', we have been creating new technologies and products that will serve as import substitutes for the industry. We are self-sufficient with very little need for outsourcing. There is tremendous opportunity; however, there are certain challenges too. Where the Indian government can help is with the improvement of infrastructure to help facilitate the packaging industry with more and better roads, bridges and utilities. This will help the industry manage the gap between supply and demand. This is where the weakness lies in the country, at least from an Indian perspective. 📍