

Customising Around the Customers' Process Problems

From being slotted as process chemical company catering to refinery and ethylene plants, Dorf Ketal has come a long way. It has established a great presence in refining, ethylene, organic titanates and lubricant additives component business. The company has recently diversified into specialty chemicals and wishes to expand into the upstream business through acquisitions.

With the manufacturing sector in India picking up and numerous expansions happening globally, the market for process chemicals and additives for refineries, petrochemicals, fuels, lubricants and oilfield industries are poised for growth. The market for high performance lubricant additives is experiencing a boost. The biggest driver for this impetus is the evolving regulations around the world that emphasise the need for enhanced fuel efficiency, health as well as environmental policies. A new analysis recently released by Frost & Sullivan states that in 2013, the Global Lubricant Additives market saw revenue of USD 11.77 billion and by 2020 it is expected to touch USD 16.28 billion. In light of the market shaping up, CEW spoke to Dorf Ketal to understand their thoughts on the market, how their business has evolved and their plans in the near future. Dorf Ketal is also one of the top 28 chemical companies in India out of the 400 ICC members who have got the responsible care accreditation.

Dorf Ketal is a research focused company. The firm's innovative chemistries are reflected by numerous patents and a corporate vitality index of more than 35 per cent. "In the process chemicals business, the company has 30 granted or filed US patents in the recent few years. The global portfolio of patents within Dorf Ketal is around 300. By way of acquisitions, Dorf Ketal also owns around 50 US patents. One of the patented products has also been awarded the prestigious Department of Scientific & Industrial Research (DSIR) National Awards for Outstanding In-

house R&D Achievements which was given by former President of India, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam," says **Subodh Menon, Founder and Director of Business and Operations**, when asked about the model of diversification that the company has undertaken.

Through this model, the company takes into account the customer's issue and customises the solutions accordingly. Customised solutions are tailored to specific needs of the customer. Solutions include combating process problems ranging from prevention, maintenance, and even remediation of operating conditions that threaten the reliability of refinery and ethylene plants. According to him, "Innovation is a constant process for Dorf Ketal, since in this process, a problem is taken back to the drawing board where new molecules, new technologies are looked at. So, it would be apt to say that the company's growth or diversification model is driven by innovation. To retain our competitive edge we have to innovate today, tomorrow and for days to come. That is the key."

Additionally, Dorf Ketal has also been innovating internally through IT; the company believes in extending its innovation approach towards IT integration for smooth operations. In order to encourage global collaboration and ideation across locations, Dorf Ketal undertook a global IT consolidation exercise. The company engaged KPIT, a leading global technology provider, for ERP consolidation by setting up a full-fledged Offshore Dedicated Center (ODC), ensuring timely application



Subodh Menon
Founder & Director - Business
& Operations, Dorf Ketal

support, infrastructure management and zero downtime. The complete global infrastructure and support has been moved to India.

Expansion through Acquisition and Infrastructure Investments

The company invests in new technologies through research & acquisitions. The company has been consistently acquiring companies globally to further consolidate its position. It acquired UOP's refining chemical and plastic additives business in 2003 and ExxonMobil's lubricant additives component business in 2007. Dorf Ketal also acquired an Indian company in Organic Titanates space in 2008. As a logical extension and to create a global foot print, Dorf Ketal acquired DuPont Chemicals and Fluoroproducts in 2009, which had a major presence in the organometallic titanates business. To further expand their market share in this niche sector, it also acquired intellectual properties from John Matthey which greatly strengthened Dorf Ketal's position in the

market. The company continues to scout for the right acquisition opportunities which will synergise with their current business verticals.

Dorf Ketal is making infrastructure investments by setting up new R&D centres and application labs with the state-of-the-art machinery and a team of dedicated doctorates. The India research centre, which is situated at the outskirts of Mumbai spearheads key innovation projects and ensures the technology availability to the customers globally. Subodh Menon believes that to provide customised solutions, it is essential to be closer to the markets. He further adds that the application labs located in US and Singapore ensures the innovative technologies are delivered at the customer's door step. The company also has both basic and application research centre in Brazil, over and above the Centre of Excellence in India. Dorf Ketal has also started a major upstream business in Brazil with its foray into Oil Fields chemicals.

Subodh Menon states, "The reason why Dorf Ketal preferred to begin Oil Fields Chemicals operations in Brazil is because of opportunities/challenges posed by the Brazilian market and at the same time the Dorf Ketal team at Brazil is highly capable to formulate like it is done in India. Hence replicating our Indian model was seamless. We plan to globalise molecules coming out from Brazil be it in the Canadian, European or the Middle East markets".

Commenting on the shale gas boom, **P N Ramaswamy, Director – Technical**, says that several downstream companies would consider shale gas based feedstocks but the industry has set its eyes on the aspect of sustainability. When asked about entering the pharma business, Subodh Menon said that the company did make some fine chemicals and also looked at the chemicals needed in the pharma industry but at present have no intention of entering that business.

Delivering Performance, Efficiency and Reliability to the Petrochemical Industry
Dorf Ketal's rapid growth in petrochemicals arena is the direct result of listening to

what customers need and then developing problem solving services and unique chemistries that work. The customers face a dynamic ever-changing production environment. Dorf Ketal's dedicated research team has created a broad portfolio of solutions that deliver the high-performance, efficient, and reliable results the industry demands – be it ethylene styrene or butadiene production.

The recent innovation in the styrene business by Dorf Ketal is expected to reduce the toxic nitro compound by 50 per cent. This is in line keeping with Dorf Ketal's vision for responsible care.

Proven in the World's Largest Refineries

Dorf Ketal is a Tier 1 strategic supplier for many of the world's largest refineries and petrochemical companies. One out of three large refineries worldwide (400+ kbd) and two of every 10 of the world's ethylene plants rely on Dorf Ketal chemical treatment to extend run length and extract maximum value from opportunity crudes and changing feed stocks. Dorf Ketal treats more than one of every 10 refinery desalters worldwide, including units at some of the largest refineries in the world, in Malaysia, Thailand, India, China and the Middle East.

Dorf Ketal's COKERMAX is a breakthrough programme for Delayed Coking to improve liquid yield by 1-3% without changing coke morphology or distillate quality.

Lubricant Additives - More of a Component Manufacturer

Subodh Menon emphasises that Dorf Ketal considers itself more of a component manufacturer and not a package provider. The company deals with components that are comprised in the package. He further added that the company entered the lubricant additives arena only because it acquired that business from ExxonMobil; he stressed upon the fact that it was again a components business not packages. Ramaswamy explains that there are a number of different lubricant additives such as dispersants, detergents, emulsifiers, friction modifiers, etc.

Since lubricants majors prefer to formulate their own packages that will enhance performance of their products, there is a unique space for component suppliers such as Dorf Ketal. Subodh Menon predicts that the lubricant market will continue to grow at a fast pace, which is backed by the Frost and Sullivan's analysis.

Conclusion

Dorf Ketal is the epitome of a young company that has discovered game changing technologies. Their research, pilot plants, and modelling capabilities together with the people behind them are dedicated to getting the right solutions for their customers, today and tomorrow.

With the refineries, petrochemicals, fuels, lubricants and oilfield industries poised for growth having a full-fledged and state-of-the-art testing and evaluation system would be necessary and this can be done through investments in R&D facilities and a team of qualified scientists. This is where Dorf Ketal would have a cutting edge over its competitors as they have been one step ahead, having based their growth model on innovation and customised solutions.

After setting up the world's largest plant for producing Organic Titanates, the company's focus would be on removing antimony out of the PET bottles manufactured by the packaged drinks manufacturers completely so that it will not be hazardous for the health. This would be achieved with its Tyzor Activate PET catalysts which are hydrolytically stable titanate catalysts specifically designed for PET bottle and film resin. Dorf Ketal plans on entering this avenue of business with new patented products through new innovated chemistries for which the trials are going on.

Subodh Menon concludes that his vision for the company is to make Dorf Ketal a well-known name in the specialty chemicals market globally. ■