

Interview: In conversation with – Mr. Harshad R. Karve Technical Director Asia at ANSYS, Inc.

Kunal Nath*

Snehal Hate *

Minal Durge *

VIM: ANSYS offers a comprehensive software suite that spans the entire range of physics, providing access to virtually any field of engineering simulation that a design process requires. Can you tell us something more about ANSYS.

Mr. Harshad Karve: If you've ever seen a rocket launch, flown on an airplane, driven a car, used a computer, touched a mobile device, crossed a bridge, or put on wearable technology, chances are you've used a product where ANSYS software played a critical role in its creation. ANSYS is the global leader in engineering simulation software. We help the world's most innovative companies deliver radically better products to their customers. By offering the best and broadest portfolio of engineering simulation software, we help them solve the most complex design challenges and engineer products limited only by imagination.

Founded in 1970, ANSYS employs nearly 3,000 professionals, many of whom are expert M.S. and Ph.D. level engineers in finite element analysis, computational fluid dynamics, electronics, semiconductors, embedded software and design optimization. Our exceptional staff is passionate about pushing the limits of world-class simulation technology so our customers can turn their design concepts into successful, innovative products faster and at lower cost. As a measure of our success in attaining these goals, ANSYS has been recognized as one of the world's most innovative companies by prestigious publications such as Bloomberg Businessweek and FORTUNE magazines.

I think only Facebook is not our customer else all are our customers even Google. Anywhere on the planet where there is an engineer applying physics or engineering, our software makes it possible to mimic the real life behaviour on the computer for him. We help product designers do better designs by simulating them on the computers.

VIM: What products / services you offer to your clients.

Mr. Harshad Karve:

- Medtronic - Using ANSYS electromagnetic simulation software, Medtronic designed a device to safely recharge a subcutaneous pain-relieving neuro-stimulator through the

patient's skin.

- Aircraft manufacturing company, the aerospace giants, use multi-physics simulation to manage and integrate the increasingly complex, distributed smart systems that comprise the modern jet aircraft.
- Construction industry use virtual simulation to understand the impact of their design decisions, ranging from site selection to architectural details to materials to heating and cooling.
- ANSYS engineering simulation for energy expand across product and process design, pollution reduction and control, carbon reduction and separation, improved fuel efficiency, reduced packaging weight, new fuel development, and meeting energy efficiency and regulatory requirements.

Typically in automotive there is a development platform, the product, and then there are variants. It takes about 3 to 5 years to develop a new platform from scratch. With engineering simulation software one can generate and evaluate variety of designs very fast. With this now companies are able to develop the platform in 2 years. Some of the Chinese companies are doing it in a year. Further by altering few things variants can be launched must faster.

VIM: What are your responsibilities as technical director, ANSYS?

Mr. Harshad Karve: Roughly 1/3rd amount of our revenue comes from Asia. We have sales team in each country which is responsible for selling the product idea. Further technical people primarily engineers who explain the customers, why and how the product is valuable to them and why should they buy it. After the product is sold support is provided. We also offer consulting and training. To give an example about training and consulting - A Korean company is making smart phones. However, their phones are having thermal issues and have heating problem. So, the company approaches us. We resolve the issues by evaluating some of their designs, simulating, teaching and consulting. There are teams who are doing all this in Asian countries like Korea, Japan, China etc. I lead these teams leading the teams to help sell the value to the customers as well as supporting them. My main KPI is the growth of the business.

VIM: What is the Marketing and Selling strategy at ANSYS?

Mr. Harshad Karve: We are a B2B company. In the past,

*Students from Vishwakarma Institute of Management, Pune.
www.vim.ac.in



we were more traditional like going to exhibitions and putting up stalls and give presentations as part of product design conference. However, today people don't have the time to travel physically or sit for the conferences. So, on marketing side we are becoming more and more digital. Now increasingly we are doing more digital marketing like writing blogs, be on social media, reaching out to our future customers through digital media, conducting virtual conference. We have Ansys HowToUse videos on YouTube, online User groups and Wikis. We also have partner network spread over 40 countries, which provides extensive resources, training and support to help our customers realize the competitive advantages of simulation driven product development.

VIM: What is the organizational culture at your company?

Mr. Harshad Karve: We are a technology company, so we are very technology, innovation oriented. Not much hierarchy and I would say it's pretty flat. Anybody can talk to the CEO, anytime. It's a very open kind of culture, very empowering. Not many processes or things to control the behaviour. Everybody knows what the goals are and they do it accordingly.

VIM: At ANSYS do you conduct any Personality development or learning and development programmes?

Mr. Harshad Karve: Yes, those are a must. We have courses for communication. Especially if we hire people directly from the campus then we have a programme called campus to corporate. It's exactly what it means. Campus recruits have some notions about the corporate world. However, many times what happens on ground is totally different than what you study in theory. We also have "ANSYS Student" a free introductory simulation software package for engineering students who are interested in learning simulation and analysis.

VIM: How do you manage the intellectuals in your company?

Mr. Harshad Karve: Actually it's tough, because everybody has an opinion. You can't just say something and walk away with it. Employees intellectually argue and come up with logical examples. In a way, it is very positive as we have intellects which are able to think by themselves. Here the key is actually not to micro manage these intellects but to post challenges that are significant enough for them. As intellectual people like challenges, we give the challenge and give the freedom to solve it. In situations, we become part of the team and help them solve the challenge. If there is a bottleneck then we help clear the bottleneck, not by interfering the process. That actually a main reason why the India team has grown very successively over the years and is actually known within the company as the powerhouse of the company.

VIM: Kindly share your views on "Make in India" initiative.

Mr. Harshad Karve: We are seeing a huge impact because of Make in India especially in the field of electronics as we are one of the leading importer of electronic goods. Make in India allows assembling Apple Phone rather than importing an Apple phone. In due course Apple will put up a factory right in India. So now you have to import only the components, not the phone. Assemble it here, it's cheaper. The next step would be to build the components themselves here. I think it's a masterstroke by the Government. It will create employment, and will stimulate innovation. The good thing is to make something you have to have a recipe for making it and once you make it, it becomes your own recipe.

Currently too much focus is on the West and how West is connecting to the East. I think South Asian connection is not very strategically looked at so far. There is a lot business to be made just within South-east Asia within countries like Thailand, Singapore and Vietnam. There is lot of opportunity for India to grow in this area. Some of the western giants are not capturing opportunities yet. So, Make in India will be not only for India but also for the South-east Asian region, especially with improved connections in form of roads and transport. Moving goods in South-east Asia has become easier and definitely it is a big boost?

VIM: Kindly give your observation on cultural differences among the countries you visited.

Mr. Harshad Karve: It's different. Asian culture is totally different from the Western culture. Further USA and UK have major cultural differences. Language difference is obvious but even the cultural differences are huge. Americans definitely do their business in a certain way, Japanese have different philosophies. For example : After the earthquake at Fukushima, Japan had to shut down its Nuclear Power Plant. So the situation was less electricity than the Demand. But hats off to Japanese people for the way they have conserved the Power? It was amazing. We were sweating in the office at 29 degrees with suit and tie and were unbearable to work but the people were doing it for two months. Instead of three elevators the company operated only one leading to waiting time of 15-20 minutes. As it was a fifty storeyed building walking up and down was not possible. The Japanese did it for two months. Isn't it amazing. or when you move in a Metro, it is damn packed, the underground in Tokyo like Bombay Locals. In jam-packed metros, when bodies are touching you, there is pin drop silence. Nobody says a word, Nobody's phone rings throughout the journey. It's totally a different culture and discipline. Other places in the World are not like that. You should travel a lot if you get an opportunity.

VIM: Does your company conduct programmes to manage the stress of the employees, or to make them feel better at

the workplace? If yes How?

Mr. Harshad Karve: We do conduct employee engagement activities like cultural day, competitions (Cricket – APL – ANSYS Premier League), getting family / kids to the office etc. All those who are interested in hiking go for the same. Couple of company treks are arranged a year. Some gardening activities are carried out. There is a belt in Hinjewadi next to our office which was filled with the dirt. We sought permission from MIDC and then created garden there through employee participation. These are some activities we do. We do not say that these are stress bustering activities.

VIM: What parameters are considered at ANSYS during performance appraisals?

Mr. Harshad Karve: Every employee is put into a certain band. Band tenure varies per band. Towards the end of two-year band if an employee starts demonstrating different / improved skills then we put the employee in the next / higher band. If employee demonstrates exceptional progress / results then we promote the employee. So, the process is performance driven. Employee initiatives are valued and rewarded. The system automatically discourages the saying that “this is not my job” rather motivates to take up next / higher level jobs.

VIM: You are with ANSYS for now more than 20 years. What are the advantages and / or disadvantages of working with the same company for such a long time?

Mr. Harshad Karve: There is a huge advantage. Because you know the company, you know the people, you know the culture and everything (history). You have relationships and networks with people, you know whom you can rely on or not. With this you can do new things much quicker. The disadvantage can be some of the bad habits that maybe existing in the organisation may not surface as you have not seen anything better (not worked elsewhere). Fortunately, I got enough opportunities to counter this disadvantage. We have always been acquiring other companies and hence got opportunity to work with new teams. Over last 5 years I have been changing my role dramatically either in form of scope of responsibility or just a lateral movement. People somehow think that growth is vertically where you grow in hierarchy. I don't look at it in that way, rather I think lateral movements are quite important which helps to develop expertise in different domains. E.g. For first 10 years, I worked with North America and suddenly one day I switched and took responsibility of Asia. When I started in Asia I went from 70 people in my team to 20 people in the team. I was not having any knowledge, language exposure, travelling experience w.r.t. Asia. It was like a start from zero expect the technology which was the same. The business was different language was different culture was different customers were different, but that actually helped me. It keeps everything fresh you learn new things.

VIM: How you lead your team? What is your style of leadership?

Mr. Harshad Karve: Leading by examples works the best in terms of culture. I was the first person to opt for public transport (MetroZip) from my company. The initiative saved company's lot of parking space. We could create garden out of it. It is tough during rains with your laptop and stuff but actually it is not that tough if you get into the habit. Over the period, now I prefer PMT or Uber even on weekends. It is actually much more convenient, no parking hassle, it is not too expensive as well. I carry my Tiffin every day to office and I don't sit with the managers. Every day I sit on a different table. With whatever limited time available I interact with all possible employees. I try to break the fear unnecessarily grown due to my position in the company, by joining different groups for lunch. We talk anything – may be about latest movie. We do not discuss anything about work. I listen a lot and rarely pose my opinion. It contributes a lot to the culture. People get clarity, direction which help them refine their vision.

VIM: We understand that a leader must be equipped with a set of competencies that are necessary to perform his/her role. According to you, which are the most important qualities that a leader should possess?

Mr. Harshad Karve: Open mind, continual learning attitude. Being humble makes learning easy. Don't be under the wrong impression about your own achievements. They may not be achievements in true sense. Definitely not for others. Even a new recruit can teach you something rather many things.

VIM: Do you involve yourself in any Social work / service? How?

Not really. We, a group of likeminded people are involved in a non-profit activity. We have started a trust called Swarayan. It has now completed five years. The purpose of this trust is to give platform to emerging classical singers in the age category of 20 to 30 years. Classical music takes many years to master. Almost at the age of 40 one becomes famous and start consistent earnings. There are outstanding singers in the age group of 20 to 30 years. However, typically due to pressure earning money and / or running family, marriages for girls, this group starts conducting tuitions and do not practice enough. And then it becomes difficult, rather almost impossible to have another Pandit Bhimsen Joshi. We are just trying and hoping for the best.

VIM: Given your hectic schedule, how do you achieve work - life balance? What do you like to do in your free time?

Mr. Harshad Karve: It's actually simple but requires a lot of discipline. I don't turn on my data connection, most of the time it's off, and I only turn it on when I want to do something. I don't go to office on weekends and might do one or two emails if they are essential. Otherwise I do not read emails on the weekends. I exercise every morning at 5:30. I run, and run for about 10 kilometres. I do a lot of a hiking, lot of activities and music. I have been learning

music since 18 years, I play harmonium. I make sure I spend time on all these things. As a result, I know my schedule for at least next two months including weekends. It all helps to seek balance.

VIM: Can you tell us something about your BTech days at IIT (Powai, Mumbai).

Mr. Harshad Karve: IIT days were quite serious. We use to have lectures at 8 a.m. The lecture rooms were about 3 kilometres away from the hostel and the main gate was about 2.5 kilometres away from the hostel but on the other side. I had a bicycle but it was always punctured (you know typical hostel days) so we always used to walk or run to reach classes on time. So 8 to 12:30 take classes, come back to the hostel for lunch, again go for practical's until 5 p.m. Technically evening were free to play or to chit-chat. However classes and practical's demand lot of self-study. I remember we use to sleep at 2 or 3 a.m. and get up at 7:30 AM and to go for classes.

Regarding exams, we used have 50% wait age for end semester examination and 30% for the mid semester examination. Each semester was of 4 months. 20% wait age was for the surprise class tests / quizzes etc. Any day you miss the class test / quiz you get zero. Saturday and Sunday we used to get for preparation. Question papers were of practical nature or application oriented. E.g. One of the professor did not set the paper. He really just said that I forgot to set the paper so why don't you try making a heat exchanger. He said here are the specification of the heat exchanger. Take number of important engineering decisions in terms of various types of materials used, thickness of the pipe etc. and come out with solution. It was rigorous and high pressure situation. So, evaluations were of this type – race against time, intense pressure, smart decision making, multi-dimensional analysis.

VIM: What advice would you like to give to the fresh MBA students stepping into the corporate world?

Mr. Harshad Karve: First 5 years of your career focus on learning and don't worry about salary. Just learn, and if learning is not happening then change. I am not saying stay in the same place but make sure learning is happening. Once 5 years go by and you've learnt something then salary is an important part. Everybody wants to make money for a comfortable life. It is an important but make sure learning is also happening. Be focused and be hungry. Now a day we see the tendency of every Friday movie, being too much on social media. My suggestion is do not get into this. Today also though occasionally, I go to office on weekends just to learn the project. Frankly speaking it is not required, still we do it. This urge to learn new things, gaining critical knowledge and abilities is a key to success. So have trust, work on it for next 5 years and everything will follow.

VIM: What skills and qualities you expect from a budding management graduate who intend to work at ANSYS?

Mr. Harshad Karve: We at ANSYS are team of hardcore engineers mainly from IITs, top notch engineering colleges from India, IIMs and from reputed universities from abroad. We recruit only from this select list. So frankly talent or technical skills is not an issue with ANSYS. Still we look for some specific skills at different levels like relationships, negotiations, empowerment, coaching, vision, strategizing etc.