

Interview : In Conversation with Mr.Suresh Bhonsale API Manufacturing DIRECTOR, SANDOZ Private Ltd

Abhay Patil, Vardhaman Munot & Sandesh Deshmukh*

Mr Suresh Bhonsle , API Manufacturing DIRECTOR, SANDOZ Private Ltd was interviewed by three of our students Mr Abhay Patil, Mr. Vardhaman Munot & Mr.Sandesh Deshmukh.

Mr. Bhonsle is a Chartered Engineer, Member of Indian Institute of Chemical Engineers, Member of Institute of Instrumentation Engineering and having wide experience in Bulk Drugs & Pharmaceuticals manufacturing activities for more than 25 years as the head of the manufacturing unit of country's largest multinational company.

He has exposure to overseas bulk drugs manufacturing facilities in Mexico, Singapore, UK, Switzerland and Philippines, Germany.

VIM: How did the Pharma turning point come in your career?

Mr. Bhonsle S.S.: It was not a planned movement, after graduating from college of Engineering- Pune, as an Electrical Engineer, got the campus placement in a company for marketing electronic goods. Later I joined a construction company named M/s. Western India Erectors and the first assignment was construction of cement plant in Assam . It was almost eleven and half years project followed by power plant construction assignments in Nagaland, Manipur & middle east countries. Last assignment in the construction sector was chemical industry in 1980. Then I joined M/s. Tata Consulting Engineers, where I was deputed chemical company Bombay Dying at Patalganga MIDC. This chemical industry experience opened avenues in pharmaceutical sector when I responded to the news paper advertisement of GLAXO and joined as Project Engineer. In 1992 formally acquired 'Chemical Engineering' degree and came in the main stream of Pharmaceutical Manufacturing in GLAXO in the year 1994. Suddenly got a call from SANDOZ and I used my whole experience in SANDOZ plant setup, where I handled different tasks and life changed from engineer to pharma person.

* MBA Students from Vishwakarma Institute of Management , Pune

VIM: What was the most influential moment of your career ?

Mr. Bhonsle S.S.: At GLAXO Ankaleshwar, Gujarat unit my boss got transferred to Mumbai and the Vice President asked me to take over as Head of Factory. That decision was the moment of a great leap in my career from Project Engineer to Head of the Factory.

VIM: Kindly help us understand the roles and responsibilities as director of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (API) manufacturing unit

Mr. Bhonsle S.S.:As our company's core business is in API manufacturing, it is controlled by lots of regulatory such as TGA (Australian), WHO etc. Consistent quality management is important. Quality is confirmed by documentation, these are auditable document. Being the DIRECTOR my responsibility is to comply with the regulatory norms and ensure the consistent quality of product and processes.

VIM: Do you find any difference between Indian bulk drug manufacturer and global player as far as work culture, organizational structure, reporting etc is concerned?

Mr. Bhonsle S.S.: : Yes, definitely there is a difference but both achieve the same goal, just way of doing is different. Global player may employ 10 people, educate & train them but Indian industry is labour oriented. Organizational structures are somewhat similar across the globe. Sandoz has also taken an initiative towards educating & training the employees through its e-learning initiative.

VIM: how does Sandoz e-learning system work or effective?

Mr.Bhonsle: We have our e- learning web portal where employees learn, listen, practice and get evaluated till they pass with flying colours.



VIM: As API markets are going through tremendous change, is it going to be a big challenge for Indian companies?

Mr. Bhonsle : Indian API industry going through lots of changes or development and the API products are recognised for purities. Lesser the impurities better will product. ICH guidelines are changing for the improvement. We are having tough competition with china, we are fighting on cost level with china but as far as quality is concern we are much ahead.

Sandoz is having base in India as we supply herbs to global manufacturer so we mfg API. National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) which is the price controlling authority ensures that API prices remain under control which has a direct impact on the final drug prices.

VIM: Whether any special management skills are required for pharmaceutical industry?

Mr. Bhonsle : I'll say not the special management skills but the mind set is required. It needs to be changed because you are dealing with a patient's health through your products. There are standard qualities set to be followed.

VIM: According to you whether API market was hit by the wave of economic slowdown?

Mr. Bhonsle: Not as such. Chemical business was in slack but there is no negative impact on API industry. API and pharmaceuticals being the life saving entities were not affected much.

VIM: Sandoz has adopted 'Total Productive Maintenance', what were the implementation issues?

Mr. Bhonsle: TPM being the Japanese concept, we could successfully implement it, but it was not an overnight job, we slowly moulded the employee mindsets and now it is having a smooth run. We consider it as 'Team Productive Maintenance'. Because it is not a one man job. It's a team work. We have developed a culture of belongingness to the machine work TPM helps in understanding what machine tell us in terms of performance. We follow continuous improvement cycle for machine.

VIM: Down the line what if Indian govt. comes up with regulation that doctors prescribes only generic drug?

Mr. Bhonsle: Actually we all are using generic medicines, it's only the matter of whether branding or not. But such a decision is always welcome as it will bring the medicine prices within the reach of a common man.

VIM: What challenges do you see down the road as far as Pharmaceutical Industry concern?

Mr. Bhonsle: As far as the quality standards are concerned, the challenges are very high and would be more in the near future. To observe the quality standards about the impurities we would require to upgrade our instruments and technology.

VIM: How do you see the role of health safety and environment management in growth of organisation?

Mr. Bhonsle: It goes hand in hand, manufacturing industries typically the output is never equal to the input as there is a lot of waste created like water waste, gas, noise etc. This adversely affect the health & safety of the workers and environment too. This cannot be neglected. Holistic training is a must. We have initiated "I change myself" training programme and have adopted all inherent requirements for production. So it is cultural change.

VIM: Do you have any future expansion plans?

Mr. Bhonsle: Right now no, we are growing in terms of money value because we have multipurpose plant, for us expansion is creating a new building only.

VIM: What is the role of marketing manager in B2B sector?

Mr. Bhonsle: Marketing managers play very important role for those who have third party sales manufacturing. Marketing managers are those who bring in business. They can be called as Key Drivers of business.