



Harish Dharamshi
Managing Director, HD Fire Protect Pvt. Ltd.

Developing, innovating and refining processes in order to design and manufacture the best in class products for firefighting applications, HD Fire Products Pvt Ltd has been delivering world-class water and foam based fire-fighting equipment and systems for over a quarter of a century now. Harish Dharamshi, _____ takes us through the journey that the Company has been through so far and the inflection point that it stands at today

Where did all this start from?

We began as a partnership firm way back in 1990 in a small workshop in Wagle Estate a distant suburb of Thane district off Mumbai. It was a very small team 3 workers with me and the 500 sq ft workshop was all that we had with us then.

What inspired you to start this business? Was this sector a predetermined choice?

The whole idea was to develop suitable import substitute fire-fighting products in India. Back then the customs duty on these products was enormous and this offered a good opportunity to supply quality fire-fighting equipment and systems that could replace imported products. Many of the fire-fighting products, which were not manufactured here in India, had a huge demand. We started with HD Fire's first product deluge valve. After having attained approval in 1991 from the TAC (Government of India), the first batch was supplied to Reliance Industries facility in Hazira, Gujarat. After that, the market for HD products opened up in a big way.

What are the challenges that you have faced in your journey so far? Tell us about your high and low points up till now.

Business grew quickly in the earlier years as we developed new products including valves, water spray nozzles and sprinklers. We then turned our attention to manufacture products for the export



Shri Rajnish Kumar - Managing Director (NBG), State Bank of India presenting the INDIA SME EXCELLENCE AWARD for Excellence in "EXPORT - MANUFACTURING SECTOR" to HD Fire Protect Private Limited., Thane, Maharashtra. Award received by Shri Miheer Ghotikar - Director, HD Fire Protect Private Limited.

market; no doubt, there were roadblocks. Your products had to obtain international UL or FM approval to be accepted by customers. I personally travelled to the UL office in Chicago, USA in 1994 to apply for approval. I had to stay there for 4 weeks to discuss, understand and witness UL test procedures for the first set of valves and spray nozzles. It was not easy to study UL standards and ask questions and clarifications to the UL team out there, particularly in the absence of internet and email. However, our hard work did pay off and in 1996 HD Fire became the first fire-fighting equipment manufacturer in India to get a UL approval for its products.

Tell us 5 points you consider relevant for being nominated for the SME Excellence Awards

We believe our selection has been the result of the following:

- Our world-class product offering supplied successfully to over 56 countries
- our consistent (20% average) annual growth in Revenue with sound profitability for the last 5 years
- the 30% + annual growth in exports consecutively over the past 5 years

- our completely Indigenous manufacturing focusing on the 'Made in India' tag with constant up-gradation of product technology and internal systems; and
- a proper business succession strategy to maximize the Company's value and long term growth.

What according to you should budding SMEs do in order to not just survive but also thrive in the present market conditions?

On one hand, SMEs have limited resources and on the other multiple business hurdles to tackle. What really needs to be done is to develop good quality people along with the Company because good companies rely on good people. Keep a long term vision of offering great products or services to customers and be focused on that while you strive for customer satisfaction. Never undermine your potential as an Indian company. Up-gradation of systems, use of technology and product development is necessary. Have a well-defined mission and vision. Follow these things and success will automatically follow.