

We ensure impeccable quality products to meet and exceed our customer requirements

By- Namrata Gulati Sapra

Neeraj Kochhar the Chairman & MD , also features Renu Kochhar, Managing Director, of the sales and marketing function for all product verticals speaks to Steel360 and sheds light on what makes the stainless steel manufacturer a force to reckon.

Q. Viraj Steel has become the largest exporter of stainless steel long products. What has your growth story been like?

A. Viraj set out on its journey in the year 1990 with a modest strength of 150 employees and started its first melting shop in 1991.

The journey of over two decades saw extension of product lines and backward integration in order to achieve the maximum efficiency. The company has come a long way from manufacturing the utensil grade of steel to manufacturing specialized Engineering products in stainless steel for various industries like Petrochemicals, Ship Building, Defence sector, Automobile sector, Architecture and construction segment etc.

Today we are one of the largest producers of stainless steel Long Products in the world and are exporting to approximately 90 countries spread across Six Continents and our employee strength has grown multi fold touching figure of 9000+ employees. Today the company has seven manufacturing plants in Tarapur and offices in Mumbai and Delhi.

Q. You began the first phase of production in fully automatic Section Rolling Mill in 2013. What are its advantages and what kind of progress growth has it recorded?

A. Our Section Rolling Mill, with capacity of 180,000 tonnes per annum, is first of its kind in India with its online pickling and labeling, automatic packaging facilities.

With this new plant in place now, we have been able to speed up our delivery process and have also further improved our product quality.

The efficiency of our process has increased multi fold as most of the processes are automated. For more than three years we have been achieving and exceeding our production and dispatch targets consistently which itself is a testimony to the fact that commissioning Section Rolling Mill has proved to be a boon for us.



Neeraj Kochhar, the Chairman & M D of Viraj Profiles Ltd



furnaces are utilized on a rotational basis. We have recently installed a gas conversion plant in association with Gas Authority of India Ltd. This new technology will not only help us in reducing the carbon footprint on the environment rather will also help us achieve the economy of scale in our operation.

Q. What are some of your most farsighted training programs and CSR program?

A. At present, we have a workforce of around 9000 employees working at different levels. At Viraj, each individual is responsible for their duties and empowered to do the right thing. Passion, ownership and transparency are the backbone of our work culture. Continuous training and mentoring programmes conducted at Viraj make us one of the most preferred employers in our industry. At Viraj, we believe that society is one of our key stakeholders. We value Corporate Social Responsibility as doing business in such a way that it provides social, economic and environmental benefits to the communities and geographies in which we operate. It is in reciprocation of their support, that we willingly share our success with them. **Renu Kochhar:** Viraj

Q. How environmentally conscientious are you as an organization? What are some of the environment friendly/ zero waste practices that you have adopted?

A. Viraj is going eco-friendly by focusing on energy efficiency in its factories and production processes with the use of eco-friendly recyclable materials. We recognize that use of recycled scrap supports waste management, conserve natural resources and reduce carbon footprint. Without compromising on quality, we use waste exchange extensively where the waste product of one process becomes the raw material for another process. These initiatives include our induction furnaces which have ash collectors to collect the dust and conveyor belts for charging process. Besides, for processes such as Induction Melting, AOD refining and continuous casting, we ensure that our induction

has undertaken several initiatives for ensuring good health of the people in the nearby villages. An ambulance has been in operation in association with Lions' club of Tarapur for subsidized access to Emergency Medical cases which need to be shifted to Mumbai for further treatment.

This facility has proven to be a boon for the people of nearby villages who otherwise had to struggle for an ambulance in case of any medical emergency. We also conduct health check up camps in the nearby villages on quarterly basis and also provide free medicines to the people. Viraj is soon planning to establish a world class Medical Facility at Tarapur.

Intervista



Q. Given that you have global footprints, how do you ensure zero defect in your products?

A. At Viraj, we follow very stringent quality measures to ensure production and delivery of flawless quality of products. We understand Quality Control as a system for programming and co-ordination the efforts of various groups to maintain or improve the quality level which allows customer satisfaction. All our plants are ISO 9001 certified and are well equipped with in-house lab testing and quality testing facilities. We have Quality Testing Spectrometers for PMI (Positive Material Identification) tests, Ultrasonic Tester and Eddy Current Tester for testing both the surface as well as internal defects.

Q. You are very technology driven. What are the most advanced technologies that you have adopted?

A. The company has recently commissioned Material Tracking System across its plants, which is first of its kind in India. In addition to tracking the exact location of the material on the shop floor, this system also tracks production recording/quality confirmation /Invoice generation and dispatch through the same system. Last month Viraj has signed an agreement with CISCO, a world class supplier for network & communication equipment, on areas of networking revamp, introducing enhanced video collaboration capability and securing our Email communication.

Q. How do you measure your performance?

A. In the last more two decades or more, we have come a

long way. We started our journey with making utensil grade steel and today we are supplying products to some of the leading automobile and electronics companies in the world so I would say that the journey has been quite good so far. Today we have 2 offices in India and overseas sales offices across several countries. Today Viraj is the leader in stainless steel long products in India and one of the top 3 manufacturers in the world.

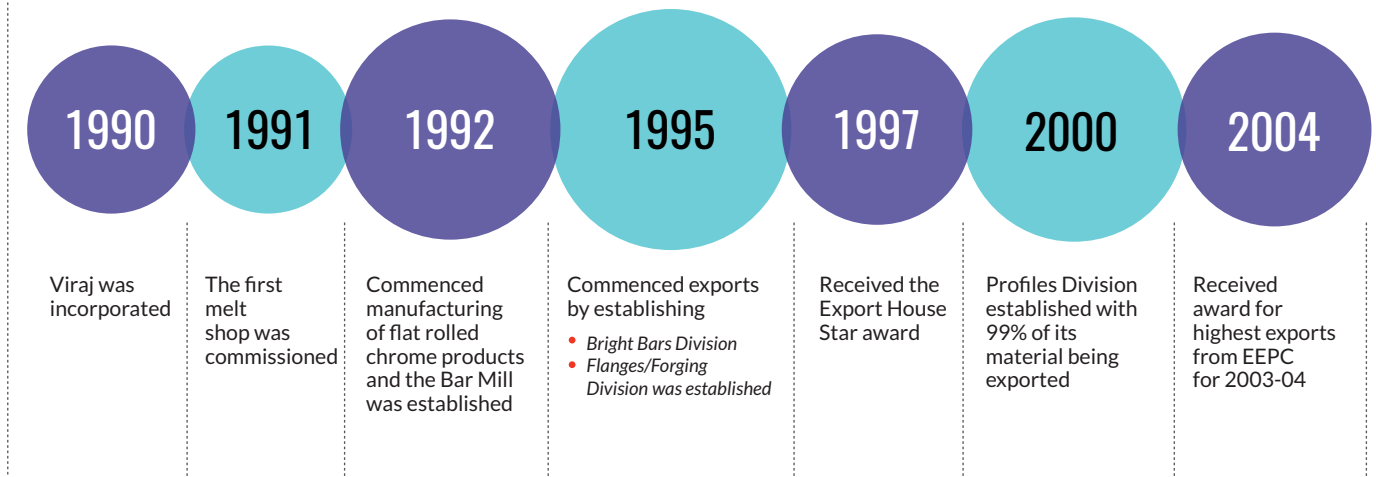
Q. What are your views on Factory 4.0 and have you embraced any of its trends?

A. Our team at manufacturing plant is already in discussion with some of the leading global players to utilize the IoT for improving our efficiency and production but it may take a while before we arrive at any conclusion. Maybe couple of months from now we will be in a better position to share the result with the readers.

Q. What are the various ways you ensure zero accidents in the factory?

A. The best way to reduce accidents in the workplace is to be proactive with prevention. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. There are many ways to prevent accidents but in implementing these methods, you need to be consistent and communicate your expectations clearly. To successfully reduce accidents in the workplace at Viraj, we regularly review things and these include putting formal safety policies and procedures in place.

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Q. Where does the current demand stand for stainless steel products in India? Is supply still exceeding demand?

A. Renu Kochhar: No doubt Indian market has grown at a very fast rate in past couple of years. However, at the same time, we do realize that the potential for growth is huge and there is still a long way to go in India. India is huge, considering the fact that the per capita consumption at 1.9 KG is much lower compared to global average of around 6 KG. The recent announcement of the government to build around 100 smart cities, strong emphasis on providing sound sanitation and waste management solutions are likely to give a strong push to the consumption of Stainless Steel industry. As the way forward, we are strongly focusing on automobile sector which is one of the fastest growing industries and we already supplying to the industry.

Q. How have quality control and anti dumping duty helped the industry?

A. Our principle of offering the world class quality products to our customers have helped us in sailing through all these years. We have always followed very stringent quality measures to ensure that nothing but the best reaches to our customers because we do understand that these products are going to be used in some of the very critical operations and compromising on quality will jeopardize the whole project. Viraj being a cost efficient producer and prominent exporter; have always been against such Trade protection measures from our export destination country. We are primarily an export oriented company and more than 90% of our products are currently being exported. So the anti-dumping policy imposed by the Government of India has not affected us much. ◉

