

Harsha Engineers drafts Vision 2010

The key elements of its strategy will see a new facility set up in an SEZ and a foray into steel metal part manufacturing. Story: T Murrall

The Rs 190 crore Harsha Engineers, which makes bearing cages, is working overtime towards becoming a Tier-1 manufacturer.

The Ahmedabad-based company is ready with its Vision 2010 which will primarily involve increasing its process capabilities and capacities to make larger cages for bearings made of brass and other metals. It will also get into polyamide bearing cages, which promise plenty.

This is not all. Harsha is preparing to set up a new facility in one

of the special economic zones to beef up its buoyant export business. The other part of Vision 2010 could see it foray into manufacture of sheet metal parts.

As its chairman and managing director, Raju Shah told this writer, "All in all, the idea is to provide solutions to customers by offering either a system or module few years down the line."

The company has earmarked Rs 51 crore for capacity expansion in 2006-07, of which about 70 percent has already been spent said director, Harish Rangwala. A

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new air-conditioned and dust-free facility is being built to make ball bearing cages for exports to Japan. Other manufacturing units are also being upgraded.

As part of its endeavour to become cost-competitive, Harsha has been adopting different technologies. At present, it makes bearing cages varying from 10 mm to 400 mm. The method of manufacturing them depends on the volume and variety. Shah said the company now plans to increase the size of brass cages to 650 mm and even up to 1,200 mm by 2010.



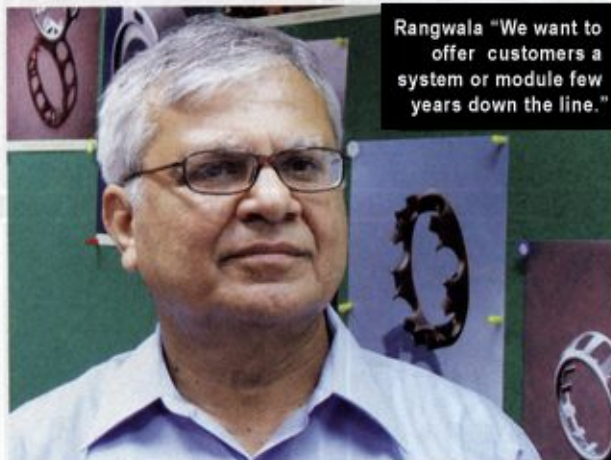
Harsha has taken special initiatives to control process rejections and optimize yield ratio.

Polyamide bearing cages have also been getting popular especially in the automotive segment due to their low NVH characteristics and cost. Worldwide, there is a shift towards glass fibre reinforced polyamide bearing cages. Though polyamide bearing cages have advantages in terms of process and cost, their application is confined to low thermal and dusty environments.

Harsha, Shah said, has already begun making these cages by creating a division in 2004. It is now exploring the option of a technology tie-up and is in talks with organisations in Germany and Austria. For the record, it had an alliance with Shimizu Seiko of Osaka, Japan, for ball bearing cages.

The company carries out two PPAPs (production part approval processes) a day, indicating development of two completely new products. Last year it averaged one PPAP daily.

Apart from a close focus on Europe, Harsha has been paying a great deal of attention to international companies in India. Rangwala said multinationals



Rangwala "We want to offer customers a system or module few years down the line."

operating here get more orders due to the obvious cost advantage and ability to develop products at low volumes.

Estimates indicate that making bearings in India works out to be cost-competitive by 30 percent. This is good news to companies like Harsha which supply cages to most bearing makers in India.

While the bearing industry globally is growing at three percent, this is 7-10 percent in the case of India. The company has been looking at exports in a big way and will set a facility in an SEZ. Global business, which account-

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ed for 63 percent of total turnover in 2005-06, has been targeted at 70 percent this year.

Harsha has been supplying nearly 25 different cages meant for taper roller bearings to the NSK-Timken joint venture in China. It is now attempting to build a bridge with Koyo and other Japanese companies.

As indicated earlier, the company is keen on making sheet metal parts. Few machines have already been installed and a small effort has begun by way of making seals for bearings. Harsha wants to leverage its tool room core competency and, by 2010, will get into large scale manufacture of sheet metal parts.

The company makes cages for taper, needle, cylindrical and spherical roller bearings. It also makes cages like deep groove and angular contact for ball bearings. It has two plants in Ahmedabad, one in Changodar and the other (a 100 percent EOU) in Moraiya.

Harsha meets the needs of almost all leading bearing makers including ABC, FAG, HMT, NEI, NRB Bearings, Tata Bearings, Timken India and SKF India. Overseas, it exports to the Timken, SKF and Schaeffler groups.

Raw material costs have been hitting everybody, especially component makers. In bearing cage manufacturing, the yield ratio is 25 percent and the rest is scrap. This could come through eliminating waste and increasing productivity.

Harsha has, however, taken special initiatives to control process rejections and optimise yield ratio. Till a few years ago, process rejection was around eight percent which has since come down to three percent.

While the company resorts to poke yokes to prevent rejected products from reaching customers, it has also been improving the process. It has recently installed cameras to detect rejections that usually escape manual inspection. ■