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Mahindra & Mahindra Limited is a US \$ 15.9 billion multinational group headquartered in Mumbai, India with more than 155,000 employees in over 100 countries, enjoying a leadership position in utility vehicles, information technology, tractors, and vacation ownership in India. Mahindra & Mahindra became the number one tractor company by volume in the world, using TQM as one of their key strategies. Mr. Ashok Sharma led the TQM initiatives at the Farm Equipment Sector of Mahindra. He played a critical role in the Sector's journey to the Deming Prize in 2003, and then led the sector to the prestigious Japan Quality Medal (currently named as the Deming Grand Prize) in 2007. Mr. Ashok Sharma is undeniably a key leader in the areas of Quality, Strategic Planning and Business Excellence, and has recently played a central role in expanding and growing Mahindra's Agri, Powerol (off grid power generation), and Spare Parts Businesses.

Mahindra & Mahindra Limited, Farm Equipment Sector has won the Deming Prize in 2003, followed by the Japan Quality Medal (currently, the Deming Grand Prize) in 2007. What do you, as the Chief Executive, Auto & Farm Strategy, Agri and Allied Business, in charge of Farm Equipment Sector of the group, see as the "transformation" before the attempt, and after winning the award?

Transformation before the attempt and after winning the prize would be:

a. Between 2000 and 2007, during the course of our Quality journey, we strengthened our processes for understanding the stated and latent customer needs. We worked closely with the

Product Development team to translate customer needs into product concepts, and by following the structured MNPD (Mahindra New Product Development) process introduced many new successful models.

b. We were able to introduce concepts like Policy deployment, daily work management, standardization, PDCA cycle, and systematic problem solving concepts in sales & marketing the led to a scientific way of working in the function. One of the unique activities that we implemented at FES was the Mahindra Sales System (MSS). MSS ushered in a scientific and systematic way of managing sales within the organization. Through regular usage of tools like win lose analysis, lot of

quality improvement initiatives are being taken by the company on a regular basis. Measurement of critical ratios like Coverage, Hit and Loyalty ratios have helped the organization to carry out root cause analysis and implement countermeasures to increase market share. Through the use of MSS, from 2004 to 2012, our market share went up from 25% to 29.1%.

c. We were able to introduce many unique activities like TQM, Customer Centric approach, Breakthrough products, and Employee engagement among other things. By implementing strategic quality initiatives like TQM and TPM, FES could achieve its vision of becoming the World's No. 1 tractor company by volume.

d. Since 2006, we have initiated TPM implementation. In 2010, 3 plants of FES won the TPM Excellence Award, and in 2012 those plants won the TPM Consistency Award, while our two plants at the Swaraj Division won the TPM excellence awards. In the last few years, machine break downs have reduced by 90%, and neared the zero break down mark, productivity savings have doubled, manufacturing cost reductions have tripled, schedule adherence has been close to 100%, and field complaint reductions have tripled.

e. The gains have been immense. But more than that, Customer Centricity has become a way of life at FES. The customer centric culture that we have been able to build is what I believe is the greatest transformation we have achieved.

What did you feel, was most difficult during the course of this journey?

The most difficult part of the Quality journey is enrolling all the various stakeholders into the Quality vision. If the stakeholder does not see value in embarking on the Quality Journey, it is very unlikely that he will put all his energies behind the cause. In the absence of tangible material and economic benefits, it is very difficult to enlist his or her whole hearted support. Creating a Quality value proposition for each stakeholder is a very difficult task.

Equally difficult is planning, implementing, and monitoring the execution of the Quality journey, once all stakeholders are on board.

I think if one is able to integrate Top Management commitment, Planning, Facilitation, Review Rituals and Recognition, Communication and create Total Employee Involvement, he or she can create a very fulfilling and successful journey.

In tractor business in India, you have already dominated the market along with your Swaraj division, which is also the Deming Prize Winner in 2012. What is your future plan, including from the standpoint of quality and/or TQM?

After the Swaraj division winning the Deming prize, we intend to keep moving forward in this journey. Our Powerol business (Off grid energy business with USD 200 Mn turnover) has taken the Deming Diagnosis and will be applying for the Deming Prize next year.

Based on the learning & experiences at FES, the Mahindra group has developed 'The Mahindra Way' which is a comprehensive Quality Model for our 115 group companies. Each year, more than 25 group

companies and functions undergo assessments from internal and external auditors through this model.

Taking a leaf from the Farm Equipment Business, we have initiated the TPM movement at our Automotive Division. We have also initiated the Quality journey at our Agri and Spares Business Units.

At the Farm Equipment Business we will continue our pursuit of TQM excellence through our internally developed model Mahindra Excellence Model, which is built on the guidelines of the Deming and Deming Grand Prize.

You have a strong global presence in more than 100 countries with 10 business sectors. How have you developed your human resources to cope well with such diversities in business and culture?

Fortunately the Mahindra group values its employees immensely. 'Dignity of the Individual' is a Core Value of the group. Our philosophy has been to 'Develop People to Develop Business'. That said, talent management is one of our key strategic priorities. There are regularly planned development programs for all our employees. These include functional as well as behavioural trainings. In addition, during our regular reviews and interactions, we identify development needs and plan interventions accordingly. These are basic tenets that we apply across the globe for our 115 group companies and 144,000 employees.

For our international locations and assignments we have a talent pool of identified managers. We conduct specific cultural and functional training

programs. Also as a policy, we encourage recruitment of local talent for most, if not all positions that are available. This enables us to create local jobs in those locations and earn goodwill.

We also have regular communication meets for all our teams where we discuss organizational achievements, priorities, and celebrate all that there is to be proud of. In addition to this, there are various other planned interactions that keep happening at regular intervals at all locations across the globe. We also actively encourage celebration of local customs and traditions. This helps clear and transparent communication, and builds good vibes at all levels and locations of the organization.

Last, our organization has always espoused an 'open door', 'free access to leaders' type of culture. This helps us develop immense trust, accountability, and credibility for each individual.

Such a strong employee centric culture exists across the group at all locations across the globe. I believe these aspects help us develop a happy, credible, and diverse employee base.

Having achieved the current Deming Grand Prize in 2007, we understand that your Farm Equipment Sector has been positively implemented TQM for business excellence. Would you dare to tell any difference between your Farm Equipment Sector and other business sectors?

I believe FES is more structured and scientific in its approach to any particular situation. The planning and review processes as well as the execution focus,

essentially the PDCA cycle is much more robust as compared to other sectors. The Mahindra Way – The Mahindra group's Quality model, run centrally by the Mahindra Institute of Quality is built on the learning and experiences at the Farm Equipment Sector. However, the passion, ingenuity, and desire to drive positive change that pervade across the group are just as high as they are in FES.

What, do you see, is the benefit of practicing TQM to you, personally?

The benefits of TQM to me personally have been tremendous. Between 2000 and 2006, as head of Product Management & Marketing Services I introduced concepts like Policy deployment, daily work management, standardization, PDCA cycle, and systematic problem solving concepts in sales & marketing. This helped me develop a scientific way of working. I learnt how to make data based decisions. We were able to increase our market share from 25% to 29.1% through the use of MSS (Mahindra Sales System) and eventually became the largest tractor company in the world by volume.

Later, as head of Business Excellence, leading the sector challenge for the JQM exposed me to all the functions of the organization, gave me a deeper understanding of Manufacturing, Product Development, and other functions, and helped me drive TQM implementation across the organisation. During this period, I also received the Six Sigma Black Belt certification from the Motorola University.

My learning through unique activities that we introduced during the JQM challenge, eg: customer

centricity, employee engagement etc. helped me gain tremendous insight into the behaviour of people and organizations and developed my leadership skills further.

All this learning helped me in various ways at various stages in my role later as the Strategy head for FES, and now as the Chief Executive for Automotive & Farm Strategy, and Agri & Allied Businesses at Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd.

Lastly, what is your advice to organizations that aim to promote TQM from now, or wish to apply for the Deming Prize?

My advice is quite simple. The Quality journey is about creating business results through implementation of TQM. Once the organization sees business results, the adoption of TQM becomes much easier.

The Quality journey is also a long and winding one. It needs unflinching Top management commitment from the beginning. Constant communication is a must. It helps in morale building as well as keeping focus on the goal. It also helps in getting the backing of the entire organization.

Having and achieving milestones like the Deming Prize and the Deming Grand Prize keep the energy going and encourage everyone to move forward.

Thank you, Mr. Sharma for your time and tangible advices. We sincerely wish you a continued success in your career with further growing responsibilities.

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