

Indian Card Clothing Company move to redefine the existing norms

New ProLYF series to be a game-changer

By Ganesh Kalidas

Indian Card Clothing Company (ICC) has been wooing the textile industry market because of its superior quality card clothing products and devotion to client service since its inception in the early 1950s. The company has achieved many milestones in its journey with the help of its extremely professional team of textile machinery and marketing experts and exceptional top management. Even after the multiple challenges faced by the company in 2017-18, with the side-effects of demonetization in the first quarter of the year and implementation of GST in the second quarter, the year ended with a remarkable performance by the company.

Although the challenge of GST and demonetization was not easy as the Indian textile market player had no idea how to proceed, and it posed a challenge for the company's domestic business, the company could still make a sizable profit. Its branches in several international markets were the main reason for its success in an exigent year. ICC has its business in 22 countries, and with the domestic market wavering, the international market helped



Mr. Prasad W. Mahale, Vice President - Sales & Marketing, ICC

the company in maintaining its overall threshold. The company's turnover grew by 20-25 per cent compared to the year 2016-17.

The prime growth was due to the flourishing markets in Turkey, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan Thailand as also the domestic market. The company has a very good alliance share in south India and a good response was obtained from the northern part of the country as well. Its total turnover split between exports and domestic sales was 30 by 70. The company holds the highest share in the re-clothing market in India. This market is very different and comes with its own set of unique challenges. The wire sold along with the card has a life of 2-5 years, depending on the production rate, the count on which the spinning is done and several other factors. This wire becomes due for re-clothing, leaving the customer with two options, either to go with the OEMs and cloth the wires with the OEM-recommended wires or to go with cost-effective, technologically advanced and quality-oriented solutions. This is where ICC comes in as it provides

all the three. This is the company's top three USPs, that it is cost effective, quality conscious and has the best technology, which is also the reason why the company enjoys the highest share in the re-clothing market.

Research and development is a continuous endeavor at ICC which had recently conducted a beta launch of its new series of products called the 'ProLYF' which, as the name suggests, stands for and is designed for extending the useful life of the card clothing. A typical life of the card clothing, even in the most advanced European machines, is about 1,000 tonnes; however, ICC has undertaken a cross industry technology collaboration wherein the useful life expectancy of the card clothing is enhanced to be 1.5 – 2 times more, i.e., around 1,500 to 2,000 tonnes.

The alpha testing of this revolutionary product is complete, and by ITEMA Barcelona the company will have it ready for the market. Mr. Prasad W. Mahale, Vice President - Sales & Marketing, ICC, said: "By quarter 3 of the current financial year the product will be launched and used by Indian companies. It will be a boon for the textile industry because of the high cost optimization that comes with this product."

The ProLYF series would double the useful life of the card clothing and would lead to downtime optimization. Another notable point of this series is that these carding wires are equipped with special wires which have a unique surface finishing. They are treated with special technology that enables the friction between the wires and the fabric to be negligible, avoiding the rupture of fiber and drastically reduces the waste percentage. This would create additional savings for the customers as the waste percentage will be reduced, which is a source of huge savings for any spinning mill.

One more intriguing fact about the new card clothing is their ability to optimize the downtime of the card. Because of the special surface treatment this card clothing doesn't require frequent cleaning. The features of the ProLYF are already being tested in the selected mills across the globe, in different fully organized and unorganized mills. The company is working even with the most challenging mills, like those in Panipat, where the products are showing excellent results, according to Mr. Mahale.

As the saying goes, 'whatever goes down, comes up', the textile industry too is expected to bounce back from its slack in the current year. An additional factor supporting this prediction is the current year being the election year. The election campaigns require a huge amount of fabric and as the fabric demand grows, the industry will grow. Although there are many other factors as well, the elections are a very prominent indicator that the Indian market can expect a boom in production and sales.

Mr. Prasad Mahale has been a part of ICC for about seven years. The stagnant growth that the company had registered before he joined turned into 18 per cent within two years after he joined; creating a growth record that

hasn't been broken since. ICC acquired new companies and made significant investments in the Turkish market, which has been a very prominent contributor to the company's growth ever since.

Indonesia too, has been a very significant market for the company for the past 2-3 decades. Here, ICC is a recognized and preferred brand and experiences a vibrant market. The company also has its sales and service team and storage facilities in Indonesia. One of the really interesting facts about Indonesia is that its sick mills are being acquired by big companies. This not only increases profit but also retains the business within the country, rather than shifting it to other low-cost countries.

The company's recent show was met with an excellent response, and many of the former clients assured continuity of business relationship with ICC. Mr. Mahale pointed out: "Trust of the clients is most important for ICC. It is this trust that encourages us to invest more and more in this market. We strengthen our operations to provide the most beneficial services to the clients."

The company is planning to come up with two new business verticals, machinery and services – catering to the customers across the globe. With this the company will play the role of Tire 0.5, a new concept which ICC will bring into the market. When a machine is purchased, it is usually advised that some spares be changed at regular intervals, although it is not clear if the parts require changing. With Tire 0.5 in play, the ICC experts would audit the company's machines from the blow room to the packing stage, to make it clear what exactly is to be replaced.

These audits conducted on a regular basis would help spinning mills in reducing their maintenance cost by considerable amounts. This procedure will give the clients an additional power to discuss and negotiate with the OEMs and optimize the cost, and would require only a minimal fee. After the analysis and advice spinning mills will be free to choose between ICC's products or the products recommended by the OEMs.

With the new divisions coming in, ICC is certain to become a big name. It plans to increase its footprints in the machine business, and wants to get into the upstream and downstream of the value chain.

The three established divisions of ICC, as Mr. Mahale highlighted, will increase the company's turnover by 5-fold in the next five years. The company is employing highly aggressive strategies, with new mergers and acquisitions around the corner. ICC plans to acquire European companies and is trying to bring them under the umbrella of the ICC brand. With these big steps to make the company even bigger, and with the Tire 0.5 concept as its major play, the company is prepared to turn the tables on the existing norms.