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'We want to make isolators affordable to the Indian market'

Mastering in manufacturing isolators, which was considered a domain of the west, Fabtech Technologies has now made it affordable to the Indian market. While Aasif Khan, Managing Director of the company believed in the idea of 'one is greater than 10', **Arvind Asthana**, Head, Containment Solutions, seconds the same saying, 'we let the experts do their job,' which kept us ahead in the league, in an interview with **Arshiya Khan**

What was the rationale behind diversifying into isolators?

Aasif Khan: We thought it would be a logical extension of Fabtech's product range. Our extension to isolators not only gave us an opportunity to demonstrate and validate our expertise in fabrication, system design, etc, but also provided us with an in-depth knowledge about various processes involved in drug manufacturing and related equipments. Besides, we feel isolators is the future of pharma processing; hence our focus.



Aasif Khan

Most importantly, isolators score over the conventional technologies as they are suitable for very low OEL/OEB manipulations where conventional system/technologies cannot be used.

How did you overcome the challenges faced in the development phase?

Arvind Asthana: As a part of any development, challenges always provide a learning curve. We have overcome our challenges tactfully and strategically. Nevertheless, lack of access to information on isolators, locating vendors for supply of critical components worldwide, detailed engineering, integration and validation of entire system to demonstrate compliance with URS and documentation processes, were a few obstacles that were later ironed out through a thorough understanding of the problems. Since India has a highly skilled talent pool, we hired the best talent available, to form a project team for isolation technology. Secondly, we brought in experts/consultants to guide the team. Gradually, we realised that a lot needs to be done to scale up our performance, therefore, we doubled/tripled our man hours and money on the project team, which was used for the development of vendors, technologies and documentation. Last but not the least, we ensured that all our technologies were in accordance with the international guidelines.



Arvind Asthana

What was your experience like when you migrated to isolators?

Aasif Khan: Firstly, as it was a new domain we had to start from the scratch, therefore it was a little difficult. For example, as we were amongst the pioneers to bring isolators to India, and with no data available, it was extremely difficult to get information on critical sub-

assemblies and interchangeability of parts. However, as we moved up the chain we discovered new ways of doing things and implemented the same in our strategy too. And now you see competition looks up to us, thanks to the cream of the industry, who are our clients. The company's strength lies in its team and the creative freedom we provide our employees and hence, they are always on their toes to tap the foreseeable opportunities. Additionally, we score an A+ in detailing and execution as well.

What issues did you face during project negotiation?

Aasif Khan: The biggest challenge was that the users not only wanted us to supply the containment solution but also the process equipments. And there is always a spares and after sales service involved in most of the process equipments. They did not realise that it is them who get eventually compromised. Therefore, it was our onus to make them understand that there is no one who makes best isolation system and best process equipment under one roof. It requires expertise which is better left to be done by the experts instead of everyone trying to make everything.

Secondly, users are always in a better position to discuss techno-commercially their requirements for process equipment and elicit the best package. Therefore, convincing them was a task amongst other things that we sorted out with much ease, then. And now we are masters in the same.

Going ahead also we do not intend to make these equipments, as we are successfully working with all process equipment vendors for various projects seamlessly without any hassles.

Which project was a milestone for you and why?

Arvind Asthana: We had quite a few projects as milestones. For instance, our first four numbers negative pressure isolation project was executed at Dr Reddys Laboratories (DRL). DRL in India has the highest number of isolators and as an end user has an in-depth experience and knowledge. The successful FAT/SAT in one visit could be highlighted which included leak testing as per ISO/PDA guidelines and compliance with entire validation protocol.

Then our first positive pressure isolation project for injectable was executed at Panacea Biotech. We are perhaps the only Indian company to successfully integrate isolators with filling line, leak test coupled with Steris VHP de-contamination system.

How would the company benefit the clients as a one-stop-shop? What does your road map for future look like?

Aasif Khan: Every solution at Fabtech is customised. The in-depth knowledge and inherent flexibility to fulfill end users requirements' has taken us where we are. In a short span of time we have a few first to our credit. We are confident of meeting even the minutest requirements of our customers. In fact we welcome every complex project, as we believe that it will put the entire team at a higher gear. Also, we do not supply equipments from our end for which we do not have expertise, though we are more than willing to integrate process equipments with our isolation system.

Our vision is to make isolators affordable to the Indian market while aiming to take it global and make Fabtech, a name to reckon with.

arshiya.khan@expressindia.com