

"We ensure that process control solutions pay for itself"



Harshavardhan Chitale, Managing Director, Honeywell Automation India Ltd, has been associated with the company for more than a decade handling various assignments as a Product Manager, Marketing Manager and then a Business Unit Head. Initially, he took over the responsibility of Head of Corporation-Strategy & Business Development and was responsible for long term planning, identification of new growth areas and developing and implementing strategies. Later he also took charge of the software SBU called Advanced Solutions, then as Vice-President of Industrial Solutions Dept (now known as Process Solutions). "Process control solutions are no longer a luxury which can be afforded by large companies alone," says Mr Chitale in an interview with *Balakrishnan Nair*. Excerpts:

How do you view the present market for process control/automation in India? What is in store for the future?

Current market for process control solutions in India is growing rapidly at the rate of close to 20% y-o-y. Besides sheer growth, there is also a qualitative shift in terms of market characteristics. I would summarize them as:

- Companies are no longer looking at automation as something which is an 'infrastructure,' but it is increasingly being viewed as an enabler of productivity, quality, safety, etc

- Increasing amount of advanced applications such as optimizations, APC, simulators, MES solutions are being purchased by chemical companies as, experience of last few years has established the high ROI potential of such solutions

- Process control solutions are no longer a luxury that only large chemical plants would implement. Even smaller enterprises in industries such

as textiles, sugar, dairy, specialty chemicals have started reaping benefits of automation.

- Companies have started realizing that true value comes not from 'hardware' but from applications and engineering and the propensity of Indian customer's to pay for the same has gone up significantly

What are the short-term and long-term plans to enhance Honeywell Automation's growth in instrumentation market in India?

We would continue to invest in our service infrastructure, solution focus and focus on delivering measurable value to our customers. Additionally we are investing in the following areas to address better the needs of the growing automation market in India:

- Expansion of our factory and system integration center: We are expanding our current factory at Pune by three times to cater to the increased volumes

- Developing solutions designed for India: We are leveraging our large R&D base in India to address some of the unique needs of the Indian customers.

Can you brief about the recent activities at your company's R&D?

Honeywell has a large R&D base in the country. Our labs at Bangalore, Madurai and Pune employ over 4000 engineers. Honeywell is also setting up a new center now in Hyderabad.

Work on latest cutting edge technologies in sensors, wireless and advanced software solutions happens in these labs in India. Our Indian labs also include a large set up for developing and testing various applications of DCS. E.g. we have a large inter-operability test set up in for Foundation Fieldbus devices in Bangalore. This is the largest set up in the country (and probably one of the largest in the world) and would be of a particular interest to the Indian chemical

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industry. We have recently developed and launched a new asset management solution called 'Field Device Manager' from these labs.

Which are the products that have greater demand in India? What are your products in the pipeline for the chemical process industry?

Bulk of the process automation market is today for basic field instrumentation and for various control systems such as PLCs and DCS. However, we are seeing increasing usage of specialized sensors (such as those for gas analysis, corrosion detection, etc) and of advanced Level 3 and Level 4 solutions.

We have just launched recently the latest release of our DCS - Release 300 of Experion PKS. This release comes with various new features such as Control firewall (first in the Industry), superior disaster recovery features and a new innovative footprint, which reduces the space requirement by almost 50%.

We have also introduced our new corrosion detection sensors and services. Corrosion is one of the biggest problems that chemical industries the world over face. Industry losses estimated due to corrosion are over US \$50 billion per year. With our solutions for real time detection of corrosion and with our services to help manage that, we hope to help the industry tackle this menace better.

Perhaps more than any other technology, computers have spearheaded the advances in process control automation. Your comments.

There are three broad technologies, which are driving developments in the process control industry, of which advances in computing technologies is certainly one. Faster micro-processors have helped pack more power into various automation platforms and controllers, have helped develop more and more processing intensive applications such as Advanced Process control and simulators, etc. Other

technologies may be advances in new sensors and advances in wireless communication.

With advances in MEMS and nano-technology many new sensors are being developed for sensing more and more properties and parameters, which were so far not being measured earlier. Honeywell's sensors for real time measurement of corrosion, is just one such example. With more robust and cost effective wireless communication, we would see increasing use of wireless in process automation. We have already launched some wireless offerings for process automation.

Today, much effort is being placed in making the user interface smoother to permit easier operation. How do you plan to bring down the training costs of your customers?

Abnormal situation management and event management has been an area of focus for the process control industry. We at Honeywell have invested lot of dollars in coming up with solutions, which help manage alarms and events effectively. These solutions ensure that operators can truly focus upon high priority of alarms and events and do not get flooded with alarms and be distracted.

We have also been one of the founding members of ASM (Abnormal Situation Management) Consortium, which was set up in the US with many large chemical and refining majors as its founders. This consortium focuses on best practices for handling abnormal situations and we have tried to capture many of these in our solutions.

How do you think information and control systems can meet not only automation and rationalization but also diversified market needs such as multi-kind and variable-quantity production, short time limits of delivery, and higher quality?

There are many solutions that have been developed to meet the increasingly

stringent requirements of the batch chemical industry. We at Honeywell have developed various batch automation and recipe management algorithms, which help manage multiple short batches, in an efficient manner. These solutions help in setting up a new batch quickly, in doing appropriate device and route selection and also in maintaining batch wise quality records.

Honeywell has also developed and implemented in over 100 pharma/biopharma plants, an MES Software solution (called 'POMS') specifically for batch chemical plants. Beside regular batch and recipe management, this solution also helps in maintaining genealogy, production tracking, maintaining tamper proof electronic batch records, etc.

What is your advice to engineering graduates with an ambition to make it big in process automation business?

Automation Industry in India offers exciting global careers to engineering graduates. There are over 12,000 professionals employed in this industry today and more than 2000 jobs are getting created in this industry every year. Lot of global project engineering as well as R&D work of various automation companies is happening in India.

Leading companies in this industry, such as Honeywell offer careers, which span various functions - projects, manufacturing, Business development and cutting edge R&D. One gets to work on projects, which are not just domestic but across various geographies. E.g. currently, engineers at Honeywell Automation India Ltd are working in over 50 countries. I would urge engineering graduates to look at this industry as an exciting career option where one not only gets a global career, a great learning value but where one can truly get to contribute in making our manufacturing industry globally competitive. ■