



Patton Group 'Refrigeration & HVAC'

Supplies the best quality brands.

Established in 1923, Patton is a leading manufacturer and wholesaler of refrigeration, air conditioning and mechanical services products supplying quality products to professionals in the said industries. **Sameer Handa**, Global CEO, Patton group, in discussion with Cooling India says, with growing food retail business in India, refrigeration has to grow rapidly.

Patton continues to expand its product range and distribution network to meet the global demand for efficient, reliable and cost effective refrigeration equipment for today and the future. What is the objective in looking for business in India?

NZ is regarded very highly on the world stage of commercial refrigeration in terms of technology & expertise. Patton has been a key player in commercial refrigeration in NZ for many years. We felt that India's requirement for commercial refrigeration is increasing at a pace parallel with the country's rapid growth and hence provides a platform for our skills and products. In order to seize this opportunity we have set up an operation based in Delhi.

What are the company's prospects in Indian refrigeration market?

Patton has a lot to offer to the Indian refrigeration market based on its experience, knowledge & expertise in the commercial refrigeration segment. Patton has extensive experience in dairy, horticulture (Kiwifruit, Apples etc), Viticulture (Wines), F&B retail (supermarkets), Fish & Meat industries. All these industries are growing rapidly in India hence, we can play a big role in meeting some of the market demands in these growth industries.

What is the product line-up and what products are especially suited to Indian market?

Product line up consists of mainly two categories firstly Patton

branded capital equipment like evaporators, air-cooled condensers & condensing units, and secondly accessory items from various other leading world brands like Henry oil management & controls, Aeroflex Insulation, Fieldpiece test tools, Think mechanical tools, Mueller Copper, Supco gauges etc. Most products are suited to Indian market as they are already being used in other high ambient markets like Australia, Pacific islands & Middle East.

What parameters you consider to meet the quality and have an edge amidst fierce competition in the refrigeration and air-conditioning industry?

As a value proposition at Patton, we like to work with the best in the

industry. With a history of 87 years in the industry we look at strong and long term relationships with partners of high quality products & long term objectives for success.

Climate Change is the buzz word and that enforces much of discipline among the companies to control emission of pollutants, energy efficient solutions and economies of scale. What R&D activities your company is engaged in?

In NZ & Australia CFC imports were banned in 1995 to help protect the ozone layer & the imports of HCFCs was restricted. Now there is a growing trend to replace even the HFCs with higher GWP with CO₂, NH₃ etc. Patton branches in NZ act as collection depots of all recovered refrigerants for destruction on behalf of Refrigerant Recovery NZ (www.refrigerantrecovery.co.nz).

In relations to innovative new products in our R&D, we have been focusing at sustainable products in terms of energy efficiency, recycling materials, noise reduction etc.

Patton has central hub in New Zealand for its diverse activities. In how many countries the company is operating as independent units and do you have any expansion plans for manufacturing activities in India besides having facilities in Australia, New Zealand and Thailand?

Patton has a strong history in NZ. We use Patton NZ as the hub for our international activities in terms of innovation, design, prototypes, lab & field testing for our new innovative products for various markets. After the successful performance testing the drawings are sent over to either Thailand or Australia to do the bulk production. Our own operations are at 9 locations in NZ, 8 locations in Australia, 1 location in Thailand & 2 location namely Delhi & Chennai in India. From these 4 countries which host our own operations we also export to other neighboring countries. Once we have established a reasonable

market share in India, we would set up a local manufacturing to meet the growing demand of India.

How do you see refrigeration and air-conditioning market in India and is it feasible to have full scale of operation in near future?

Air-conditioning market will keep growing with the economic growth in India. As the affluent middle class grows the demand for air-conditioning will grow with that. The changes in weather patterns is another factor which is causing an increased demand for air-conditioning everywhere.

Refrigeration in India is still at its infancy. It has a long way to go so we expect huge growth in this segment as India tries to catch up with rest of the world. As Indian government is encouraging the food & dairy industry to minimize the wastage & look at better ways of food preservation & the value added to milk processing & production, refrigeration will certainly play a big role in both these areas. Also with growing food retail business in India refrigeration has to grow rapidly. All these and other opportunities demand us to have a full scale operation in India in the near future.

Would you tell us about the opportunities and challenges you face while doing business in India.

Opportunities in India are huge but one needs a lot of patience. Sometimes, the things move slowly & decisions take a very long time. It sounds strange but finding good skilled people & retaining them is always a challenge. The geographical distances between different parts of the country is another challenge when you are trying to cover the whole country.

Does the company intend for tie-up and collaboration with other counterparts to avail advantage of market spread and expansion?

Yes, it is our intention to work with

some key strategic partners to grow the business rapidly. We are in discussions with several parties in relation to this. This is the only way to get a full coverage of a vast country like India.

How you are placed globally and do you have sigma levels to achieve quality standards to position your brand more effectively?

Based on our history of success, we are placed on a good & strong position globally. Currently we are in the process of implementing the principles of Lean Management System in all our operations.

Our manufacturing operation in Thailand is ISO 9002 accredited.

We are working to build our brand globally, which is an ongoing effort.

Would you please highlight about progress and expansion plans of company on a global scale.

We have made significant progress globally in the past 4 years. While we enjoy a significant market share in NZ market we have grown a lot in Australia. In the last 4 years we have gone from having 2 outlets to 8 outlets today. This is work in progress still as we intend to increase our outlets to 15 in the next 2 years.

Setting up manufacturing base in Thailand in 2007 was another strategic move for our global expansion aspirations. As Thailand enjoys free trade agreements with Australia, NZ & preferred trade agreement with India, that makes Thailand a very strategic location for us. We are also selling our products throughout South East Asia & Middle East from this base. This is again work in progress as we develop some of these markets further.

As discussed earlier the operation in India also has a huge potential for growth in the future & not only for domestic market but also to become a hub for exports to other neighboring markets. ■