Hawa Valves – a critical valve player

A lot of new valve companies are starting up all over the world. Apart from China, India is probably one of the countries with the highest number of new valve companies. A quite good and successful example for this is the story of Hawa Valves. Only being established in September 2001, the company has grown quickly into a strong player on the global valve market especially in the upstream hydrocarbon industry. Valve World travelled to India to visit the company's head office and sat down with Mr Javed A. Hawa, Managing Director, and talked to him about the quick rise of the company, their current business and to see where Hawa Valves wants to go in the next couple of years.

By Ladan Pourtork, Christian Borrmann & Gillian Kersley

Although the history of Hawa Valves started way back in 1939, when the company was only a trading company importing valves and related equipment into India, Hawa Valves, as it is known today, was established in 2001. Says Mr Hawa: "It's more like a legacy of carrying on the name in various forms. Somewhere along the line, in the second generation, when my father came into the picture, he went abroad on an apprenticeship and was training in a factory in Scotland for four and a half years and thereafter, near Düsseldorf, Germany, for a year. He came back to India with the intention of getting into manufacturing which he did. Then when I came into the company, my intention was to build on the work done until that time, and take it forward rather than just reap the benefits of what the earlier generations had achieved." And he adds with a smile: "I wanted to contribute something rather than be just another player or a run of the mill seller. That was always the more difficult path to take because it's challenging and you're trying to do something new. But I feel, unless you have a contribution to the industry that you are serving – a genuine contribution by way of some value that you have to offer the industry – you will not be a success in the long term."

The Indian company has three factories. The largest of these is in Hubli, 650 km to the south of Mumbai, the smallest is in Ahmadabad, and the head office and the design centre can be found in Mumbai. Around 400 people, technical staff as well as skilled workers, work across all three locations in order to produce valves for the hydrocarbon industry sector.

TAMAP listing, R&D, and testing

Right from the beginning, the focus was to get into the very high end, difficult application and working environment valves, exotic and difficult materials and high pressures as Mr Hawa explains: "As you can imagine, the TAMAP (Technically Approved Manufacturers and Products) listing by Shell Global Solutions International (the Netherlands) was an important step for us. I'm proud to say that we are listed in the highest category – very high pressure valves, up to 2500# Class, in larger sizes, and all materials including exotic and difficult materials such as Duplex, Super Duplex and Nickel Alloys. We hope to build on this because it has involved a lot of work over the last many years but it is where we always wanted to be and we want to take it forward from here now. Other clients we work for are major oil companies in the Middle East including Saudi Aramco and others in the region, and also locally for the Indian state oil companies (Indian Oil, Hindustan Petroleum, etc.), Indian private oil companies."

In order to be able to work with these customers, R&D and extensive testing and design validation play an important role. Mr Hawa: "For our R&D, we allocate a separate annual budget and resources and we have a core team of three, including myself, who look at product development and decide what we want to do during the coming year. We don't believe in haphazardly responding to what a customer wants, but more in getting there first and developing something we had already planned to do. We look at our own designs, we validate them and go through a cycle of development of a product and what products we feel will actually be used in the market in the coming years."

In-house testing works slightly different from the above mentioned R&D plan. Here, testing is more to do with required procedures and validation for a particular order. "We have all the necessary equipment to carry out, for example, life cycle testing, fugitive emission testing in high and low temperatures," points out Mr Hawa and he concludes: "In short, our testing procedures are order-centric. For example, we are, at the moment, setting up a hyperbaric chamber which is a pressurized chamber where we will be testing valves for undersea service."

Key markets and key industries

Due to the geographical location, in common with most Indian companies in this sector, the company's preferred key markets would be closer to the Middle East. "However, the way the market is today, I consider it to be very important to extend our footprint as wide as possible and to reduce our dependency on any one particular market or any one particular region. Ten years ago, we took the decision to focus on one region, build up our strength there, and build a good reputation to give us references that we can use elsewhere. Everybody knows that it is advisable to have as wide a footprint as you can and for us this is now possible because of what we have done in the past," says Mr Hawa.

As mentioned earlier, the hydrocarbon sector is the company's key industry. It is the largest industry sector to work in and although it is so enormous "it sometimes seems like a big family," smiles Mr Hawa. "And it is a very exciting and challenging sector to be in because, what we have to remember is that, of all the hydrocarbon subsectors that we work in, upstream is the most dangerous, the most isolated, the most critical and, for practical reasons, the most difficult sector for any valve company to work in. It is also the most quality conscious, particularly now with regards to the various safety issues that are so prevalent."

Asked whether he knows of a recent example where his company successfully worked together with a client, Mr Hawa tells us with pride about a project in the South China Sea: "Back in 2008, we provided all the processing valves for a central processing platform in the South China Sea. All the manual valves, about 4,000 in total, in various sizes, were from our company, in sizes ranging from about ½ inch to about 28 inches, in all pressure classes right from 150# to 2500# and in all different materials including difficult materials like Duplex and Nickel Aluminium Bronze. A project like this is where we really excel. It gives us a great sense of pride that, in spite of having supplied so many valves we never faced a single problem on that project and, to date, we have not had a single call from the customer and I don't think we will for a long time to

KYC (Know Your Customer) – policy and philosophy

Mr Hawa: "Our company philosophy is that no job is more, or less important than another. They are all important and critical. It's that simple. But it's also a question of understanding what exactly a particular job demands of you, your company, your resources and the way things have to be done – therefore you have to know your customer. It's then a matter of being able to adapt your way of working to incorporate those important points. For us, every job is as critical as the next, not only where safety and the environment is concerned but also, for example, for the economy of the nation where this job is being done. We had a job in far-east Asia where, had we not delivered the valves on time, the electricity supply to the whole city would have been affected. So, we believe every project and every job is critical and different, but in equally important ways."

come, because a lot of thought went into the project."

The role of the customers

Obviously, like anywhere else nothing works without clients and for Hawa Valves this is no exception. Mr Hawa: "We sell our products through agents. The advantage of this is that, in most cases, we have a direct contract with either the end user or, more usually, the EPC contractor and we have a local agent to facilitate the process. Agents also provide value to the process by way of giving a good service, a prompt interaction and ensuring that communication channels are well established and flowing freely. Once the project moves towards commissioning and testing they will also provide site presence, technical back up and so on. We train their engineers and then they have people on the floor first-hand talking to the users. It's a system of working as closely as possible with the valve users that helps us to understand their requirements, technical and otherwise."

Working closely together with customers is very important for the success of a project. Sometimes that means that they have to go the extra mile and develop an individual valve because a typical off the shelf valve would not be sufficient. "Let me give you an example of such a project: A customer who was replacing valves every three months. We provided engineered products with special metal seats and so on, and made an educated calculation and prediction that no replacements would be necessary for about 2½ years. Just a year and a half later, the customer came to us stating that they were very happy with our product and wanted to order more." And he continues: "Customers like this have enough issues that they are faced with on a daily basis, the statutory regulatory environment of today, the strict safety and environment standards for example, so we are very proud and happy that we can help them not to have to worry about whether a valve is not working properly."

The road ahead

The future looks promising. The fact that several projects are running at the moment, with more to come in the near future, Hawa Valves is in a comfortable position for the coming years. "All our new projects are interesting, but if I, personally, had to pick one, I would choose a project that we are currently doing in Abu Dhabi – the Bab-Thammama project – which has a whole set of very difficult and very aggressive media applications that we are tackling, again a very diverse set of materials in various different forms", explains Mr Hawa and then points out that "this is a typical project that we enjoy working on, with a lot of technical understanding required and in depth research about exact customer expectations and requirements. Hopefully this will lead to greater things and a very important milestone for our company."

Asked how he sees the future, Mr Hawa expects that the company will have become a much bigger player by virtue of the work that has been done in its formative years. "If you ask me as far as growth is concerned or how large we will have become, that's difficult to say because those things will also depend on the world economy and global situations. But we do know that, whatever happens in the world, our brand will be a much stronger brand as far as the quality elements are concerned. That is the aim we have rather than to tell you we will have 10 more factories and 5 more locations or we will be employing 100,000 more people. That does not make sense to me. You can actually have fewer people and a better system to make a better product or, on the other hand, you can be a very large player but you might not be producing better quality. What I think and expect to happen in the next five years is the worldwide perception and understanding of Hawa Valves as a critical valve player," concludes Mr Hawa.

Hawa Valves

The company engineers and manufactures valves for the hydrocarbon industry, in particular, the upstream hydrocarbon industry. This niche is where they concentrate their efforts and manufacture a variety of valve types used in upstream hydrocarbon projects. They focus primarily on manual valves, but they also produce automated valves. Although they don't provide the actuators, they will fit any actuator preferred by the client. The largest percentage of valves, in terms of numbers, used by such a project are Ball Valves so this is the highest volume production. Also a lot of Check Valves are used, such as Dual Plate Check Valves, Globe Valves and some types of Gate Valves. In India a lot of hydrocarbon projects also use a lot of Plug Valves which Hawa Valves also make. In all, the concept is, rather than make many types of valves and sell these, that the requirements of the industry dictate what is engineered and built. However, this does not stop further developments of new or improved products for this sector.