

“Our aim is to cater to the growing need for skilled labour in the industrial development sector of India”



Nuvoco Vistas Corp. Ltd. – formerly Lafarge India Ltd – has been a part of the Indian construction landscape since 1999 through its cement business; and from 2007 via its ready-mix concrete (RMX) and aggregates businesses. Long committed to sustainable development the company pursues a strategy which combines industrial know-how with performance, value creation, respect for employees and local cultures, environmental protection, as well as conservation of natural resources and energy. Today, Nuvoco provides opportunities to over 2,500 people in India and works for skill enhancement and upgradation in three areas, namely employees, community and professional institutes. **Devendra Shangari, Chief of Human Resources & Industrial Relations, Nuvoco Vistas Corp. Ltd** offered **Shrikant Rao** a view of the role played by his organisation in skill development both within the company and at a community level.

Give us an understanding of Nuvoco's focus on worker skill development both within the company and outside it through outreach programmes? What is the expertise in terms of skill development that the company offers to its employees?

We believe honing the talent of people that we hire on a continuous basis is our prime moral and social obligation. We are responsible for developing and enhancing their skills and making them better contributors in the process. Additionally, we have been hiring apprentices – a government requirement – since 2010, and provide them opportunities to gain industrial experience. We also recruit Graduate Engineering Trainees and Diploma Engineering Trainees from government-aided institutes especially from the National Institute of technologies (NITs) and Government Polytechnics in our states of operation to promote skill upgradation and the employment potential of local human resources. Our contribution is also in the form of helping institutes develop or calibrate curricula,

and in some cases, also assisting with programme management. Nuvoco has been closely associated with ITI Kharod, Janjgir in Chhattisgarh for long. More recently, we have been helping the institute with effective programme management, and have also played an important role in calibrating its curriculum. Additionally, we offer on-the-job (OTJ) training experience at our manufacturing facilities to under graduate students from the institute while also benefitting from the educational facilities. We have adopted ITI Kharod three years ago and since then our efforts have been to develop infrastructure and capabilities of the students. The company has been associated with the National Council of Cement and Building Materials, Ballabgarh (NCBM) for more than 10 years in developing customised programmes on cement quality and also hiring CROs (Control Room Operators). More recently, Nuvoco introduced a three-semester Diploma in Industrial Safety and Environmental Management (DISEM) in collaboration with Jadavpur University (JU). The course has been developed

with a vision to cater to the growing need for skilled labour in the industrial development sector of India, and bring it on par with international standards.

Briefly take us through the training programmes offered?

Nuvoco has an in-house Learning and Development department, which offers a range of training interventions based on individual development needs. We have also tied up with key technical institutes to impart the necessary inputs; in some cases, through customised programmes. It was recently awarded for being amongst the top 50 companies in India's first People Capital Index [PCI] list. With a high degree of employee satisfaction pertaining to its talent development efforts and programmes we were the only company in the construction materials domain amongst the winners. Nuvoco carries out a number of Technical Certification courses within the organisation on a regular basis through the year. The focus is largely on CROs, QCSOs (Quality Control Shift Operators), and MESOs (Mechanical

and Electrical Shift Operators). Once identified, the relevant candidates have to undergo rigorous class-room and OTJ training; spanning 12-15 months. They are also given project assignments, proficiency and validation tests, which they have to successfully pass in order to get certified. We recruit Graduate Engineering Trainees and Diploma Engineering Trainees from government-aided institutes; after receiving OTJ training for 15-18 months; the trainees are generally absorbed into the organisation.

One of our latest initiatives, 'PitStop', is based on the principle followed in Formula One racing; where a racing car takes a quick break in the pits to either refuel or repairs or changing tyres or mechanical adjustments, or all of the above. Similarly, PitStop is a talent management initiative developed for Nuvoco to identify and groom employees with the right aptitude and potential to maintain and replenish its robust talent pipeline. Those employees who have consistently performed at a certain level for three consecutive years, and are backed by an appropriate behavioural profile, attitude, and a 360-degree evaluation are selected.

At Nuvoco, we care for the safety of the people associated with our business; and this concern extends beyond our employees; to our business associates and members of communities around our plants as well. Our aim is ZERO Harm, and we take this responsibility very seriously as a noble social cause. Consequently, one of the many programmes around safety involves educating drivers that transport our products from the plants to the market with Defensive Driving Training [DDT]. The National Safety Council, USA describes DDT as training for motor vehicle drivers that goes beyond mastery of the rules of the road and the basic mechanics of driving. Its aim is to reduce the risk of collision by anticipating dangerous situations; despite adverse conditions or the mistakes of others. This can be achieved through adherence to a variety of general guidelines as well as the practice of specific driving techniques. All drivers at Nuvoco undergo this training, and their performance is also monitored



on a regular basis. Further, they also have to maintain a 'report card' which tracks the number of refresher trainings they have undergone and when the next one is due. All this contributes to making the roads safer and reducing accidents. In terms of tie ups the company has collaborated with IIM-Lucknow to design a customised Executive MBA Programme. Participants were selected successfully passing an online Programme Aptitude Test (which were assessed not only through skills and abilities in functional areas; but also through an assessment of supporting personality traits that determine success in modern work environments) and screened by the IIM faculty. The course comprised a blend of online and classroom sessions along with online quiz tests and project evaluations. We have also tied up with OEMs like E. L. Smith, SKF Bearings, Siemens, ABB, and Losche for providing technical training for a fixed number of days in a year. Every year, we identify a batch of 20-25 people for these training sessions.

How have you aligned yourself with the government's Skill India mission? Could you name some important national projects where Nuvoco's expertise has come to bear?

Nuvoco's endeavour has always been to identify the appropriate talent and nurture it. Our recent association has been with JU for introducing a three-semester Diploma in Industrial Safety and Environmental Management (DISEM). The aim is to cater

to the growing need for skilled labour in the industrial development sector of India, and bring it on par with international standards. With this course, we intend to bridge the gap between the need for development of skills that are not addressed at the workplace. The company has been closely associated with ITI Kharod, Janjgir in Chhattisgarh for long. More recently, we have been helping the institute with effective programme management, and have also played an important role in calibrating its curriculum. Additionally, we offer OTJ training experience at our manufacturing facilities to under graduate students from the institute; while also benefitting from the educational facilities. Further, we have been associated with the National Council of Cement and Building Materials for more than 10 years in developing customised programmes on cement quality. Another area in which we are bridging gaps is in imparting training to masons in many parts of the country. Masonry doesn't have any formal training in India and yet, they play an important role in laying the foundation of any building or construction. Nuvoco has been offering a certified mason training programme for a number of years to address this gap. Closer home, we tied with up IIM-Lucknow to design a customised Executive MBA Programme and Jombay, a talent assessment and capability building company, to create a customised talent management programme for Nuvoco employees. In the cement segment, Nuvoco's products are primarily used by Individual Home Builders. Our

Cementing Construction

Formerly Lafarge India Limited, Nuvoco Vistas Corp. Ltd., is a leading manufacturer and retailer of construction materials with a vision to build a safer, smarter and more sustainable world. The company started operations in India in 1999 by taking over plants from Tata and Raymond and over the past eighteen years has emerged as one of the major players in the country. Today it has an installed capacity of around 10.92 MTPA with six cement plants in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and West Bengal; and a pan-India presence in the ready-mix concrete (RMX) business with close to 70 plants across the country. Nuvoco's operational focus is currently across two business divisions. In cement it is among the leading players in Eastern, Central and North India with high performance blended cement variants. Its premium product portfolio includes Duraguard, Duraguard Microfiber, PSC, Concreto, and Infracem. The company has also forayed into value added products like construction chemicals, wall fill solutions and cover blocks. Its ready-mix concrete is trusted alike by large developers, small contractors, builders, architects, government agencies, and individual house builders. The premium product range comprises Mega[™] Series, Mega[™] LWC, InstaMix, Arvevia[™] and Agilia[™].

RMX products have been chosen for the Delhi, Jaipur and Mumbai Metro projects; in addition to a number of private high-profile projects like Lodha World One in Mumbai; where we offer concrete of a specified strength and properties to meet specific customer needs.

Could you take us through the steps being taken by your company to encourage improved standards in areas like health, safety, environment and industrial best practices?

Our aim is ZERO Harm, and we take this responsibility very seriously as a noble social cause. We care for the safety of our employees by equipping them with the right Personal Protective Equipment [PPE] and enforcing its use. Using heavy machinery, working at height, entering confined spaces, handling electrical equipment – are some of the high risk activities that employees at Nuvoco encounter on a daily basis, and we work towards ensuring that they are well equipped in knowledge, skills and tools to mitigate them. This information and training is also extended to contract workers and associates; basically, anyone who is directly or indirectly connected with Nuvoco. We also conduct a number of programmes for our RMX customers on taking safety precautions at a work site and educate the workers on how to adopt and follow safe practices. We also organise DDT sessions for drivers across our manufacturing units and also our offices.

These trainings are monitored and refresher courses are also conducted to ensure awareness and compliance. One of our recent initiatives has been to introduce a three-semester Diploma in Industrial Safety and Environmental Management (DISEM) in collaboration with JU. The course has been developed with a vision to cater to the growing need for skilled labour in the industrial development sector of India, and bring it on par with international standards. With this course, we intend to bridge the gap between the need for development of skills that are not addressed at the workplace.

Given the scale, size and complexity and smartness required for delivery of construction and infrastructure projects across the nation what are the main skill sets required?

The construction industry is influenced by locally available resources; whether one considers Individual Home Builders (IHBs) or large real estate development projects. The demand for infrastructure is constantly growing as the government is also pushing for the same. The major challenge faced is the shortage of skilled and trained manpower that is locally available. With development taking place in Tier 2 and 3 cities migration to the metros has reduced over a period of time. The need for developing skills like millwright fitters, masons, and applicators is being felt by the entire industry, and the existing gap has to be addressed by training locally available labour and enhancing their skills.

Going forward do you foresee a big leap in technology application across projects? If so how prepared is India to meet the requirements of new construction techniques and usage of new construction material? From a Nuvoco perspective how do you see the company addressing those challenges?

The role of technology in the construction segment has been evolving over the last two decades and is set to take a huge leap. The pace, quality and automation in our sector is influenced by rapid urbanisation; with a heavy push from developed countries and increasing demand for Best-in-Class products. With the entry of MNCs the Indian consumer has been exposed to a wider choice of construction solutions. Consumer expectations, too, have changed with 'Value for Money' now changing to 'MORE Value for the SAME AMOUNT of Money'. For instance, the cost-effective sector of affordable housing is looking for more innovative solutions to reduce cost while offering better quality. The industry has responded, in turn, and has welcomed new a breed of Value Added Products (VAPs) giving due emphasis to quality over cost alone.

What are your prescriptions to enhance national skill development?

In order to enhance national skill development and to be better prepared to meet the evolving needs of the industry the issue needs to be tackled at three levels.

- Invest in training locally available resources in those specific skills that are in demand now or will be required by the industry.
- Encourage partnerships between corporate and local training/educational institutes to ensure calibration of the curriculum in order to align it with the dynamic needs of the industry. Such partnerships will also offer students an OTJ interface, which will better acquaint them with the ground realities.
- Keep regulatory provisions and acts related to industrial training and apprenticeship in tandem with the government focus and the growing needs of the construction industry. 