



INTERVIEW



Mr. S Anantharam

Vice President – Sales & Marketing (Hindalco Industries Ltd)

“Packaging Industry should urgently focus on Sustainability”

PackagingConnections: What is your educational background? How did you get involved in the Packaging industry?

Mr. Anantharam: I am Chemical Engineer from Jadavpur University, Calcutta and have also completed my Post Graduate Diploma in Management from Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta. My overall association with packaging Industry has been for 18 years in all.

PackagingConnections: Your key activities at work? What is the most rewarding part of your work?

Mr. Anantharam: Key activities pertain to ensuring pre-agreed targets of achieving top-line are met along with commensurate actions to improve bottom-line. The most rewarding part of work is in

overcoming and achieving business challenges through well thought out strategy and plans and in their successful implementation.

PackagingConnections: The most prestigious awards you have received? And the awards which meant the most to you.

Mr. Anantharam: The recent award in recognition of my completion of the half-marathon race in the Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon has been very dear to me as it reflects my success in the biggest challenge of a person's life – that of competing against self and successfully stretching beyond one's comfort zone.

PackagingConnections: Your key achievements? Have you, or your organization, been recognized in any way for your great work?



Mr. Anantharam: Amongst several achievements I greatly treasure the introduction and launch of Polyester/Poly based 'Paise packets' for Tea and coffee packing, which I was associated with in 1996-97. This was during my stint with packaging company Flex Industries Ltd and was carried out on behalf of Hindustan Lever. Some of the other achievements include the introduction of packaging systems for the first time in India like 'Vacuum packaging – brick packs', 'Stand-up pouches with Spouts' for edible oils etc.

PackagingConnections: What unexpected costs and headaches have you had to deal with?

Mr. Anantharam: In new Package development the basic challenge always revolves around two factors – First challenge is essentially deciding the right combination of packaging materials which will meet the 'Packaging' need of the product and the Second challenge is always in terms of meeting the cost targets. In my experience the cost challenges have usually been the more demanding ones and one strategy that has helped me in overcoming this challenge has been to analyze and cogently present my arguments from a 'total cost, including system costs' perspective.

PackagingConnections: What is one thing about the industry that you would change?

Mr. Anantharam: The 'Sustainability' focus of the packaging industry needs more attention urgently.

PackagingConnections: Where do you see the packaging industry in next 5 years?

Mr. Anantharam: Increasing 'Consumerisation' is one key underlying driver of the packaging industry. The tremendous economic growth in our country is sure to fuel the 'Consumerisation' to newer heights and this augurs a sizzling growth potential for the packaging industry not only in the next 5 years but at least for the next two decades.

PackagingConnections: Could you share with us your key plans for the future?

Mr. Anantharam: Organization policy forbids such sharing, sorry.

PackagingConnections: What has been your biggest challenge? How did you overcome?

Mr. Anantharam: Developing a packaging solution is all about identifying the true need of the customer in its entirety. Many a times the challenge has been in sifting and identifying this 'true need' from the 'stated needs' as expressed by the customer's representative with whom one is interacting with. In-depth interaction with all principal players in the customer organization (the designer, the purchaser, the producer, the sales and marketing personnel etc) and validating the packaging need with each constituent is the only certain way of identifying the true need completely.

Packaging Connections: What are three important tenets (Principles) that you work by when beginning a new packaging project?

Mr. Anantharam: True Need Identification and its fulfillment. Extensive field testing and verification before adoption. Minimizing Environmental impact

Packaging Connections: Your packaging dream?

Mr. Anantharam: The day when a man made packaging can rival nature's packaging by meeting the ultimate functional characteristic of packaging – the ability to communicate the condition of the product inside – as illustrated by nature's packaging of a fruit like Coconut.

Packaging Connections: Any tips you want to share with the packaging professionals across globe?

Mr. Anantharam: Like 'Services', 'Packaging' provides an opportunity to 'add value' to a product and thereby

enable product differentiation. Added to this its applicability across a whole spectrum of industries, enables packaging professionals to make a genuine contribution to their customers and their businesses by offering 'win-win' solutions which in the ultimate analysis contributes to the economic development of the country. If the new professional approaches the packaging business with such an attitude and approach he will surely succeed by not only meeting the customer's expectations but in the process will also be able to fulfill his own aspirations.



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