Charge of the LED brigade

Arun Gupta, global CEO, NTL Lemnis, on why it's difficult to make LED lighting solutions popular in India

INTERVIEWED BY JAYASHREE MENDES

NTL Lemnis recently launched a range of lights for the healthcare segment. What are the benefits they offer?
We launched a range of LED lighting products under the Pharox brand for the healthcare sector. We created three special categories of products for them that have wide use in hospitals, nursing homes, laboratories and clinics – ceiling lights, down lights and LED tube lights.

According to a report brought out by Equentis Capital, the Indian healthcare market will grow to $158 billion in 2017 from $79 billion in 2012. This means the market will grow at a CAGR of 15%. Hence energy efficient lighting in healthcare sector is a desperate need.

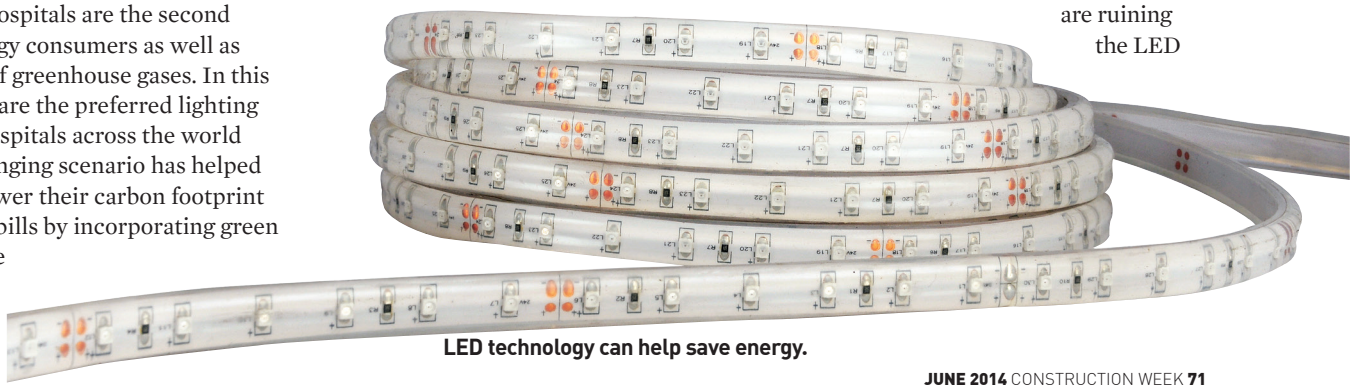
We also realised that the healthcare industry is driven by 24/7 electricity usage and hospitals are the second largest energy consumers as well as producers of greenhouse gases. In this light, LEDs are the preferred lighting choice at hospitals across the world and the changing scenario has helped hospitals lower their carbon footprint and energy bills by incorporating green designs. The most important areas for LED lighting are OTs, MRI rooms and CT scan rooms.

Lighting manufacturers often stress on sustainability. Could you explain the technical aspects of NTL Lemnis's products with regard to the green factor?
NTL Lemnis manufactures LED lighting products that are by far the cleanest lighting technology. The company is in the business of providing sustainable lighting solutions that are environment-friendly and increase energy efficiency. As such, we are continuously working towards a sustainable future. In our own way, we are doing our bit in encouraging the government utilities, by far the largest consumers of electricity, to adopt LED technology, thereby saving on carbon footprint as well as energy.

LED lighting solutions are expensive, while sustainable. How can you lower the cost for customers?
LED based lighting is a new technology and consumers are yet to understand its benefits and adopt them. In the near future, with evolving technology, LED will take a major share in the lighting industry.

The cost of LED manufacturing is still high as it does not meet economies of scale in terms of volume and the reason for the high prices. When the demand for eco-friendly lighting products grows, production volume will see a commensurate increase and per unit cost of the LED lamps will come down drastically. However the major reduction in prices will come from technological advancements which are already happening in the industry.

Since you import a major part of the components, what are some of the points that the Indian government must look into that will ease manufacturing woes?
The majority of imports are being done by large scale Indian manufacturers and suppliers from China for various product components as well as complete products. At the same time low quality and low cost Chinese LED products available in the market are ruining the LED



LED technology can help save energy.

A reduction in prices of LED will come from technological advancements.

market just like they did a decade ago for CFLs. These low quality Chinese LED products damage the consumer's perception of LED products, as they fail to perform on various parameters, like product life, light output, etc. Most important factor for failing of an LED product is the Indian power conditions. The electronics of the product should be developed that can withstand the Indian power conditions.

Sub-standard imports is a big threat and the Government has to ensure that policies are put in place that ensure that India does not become a dumping ground for low-quality, cheaper imports. The low quality of products can cause immeasurable harm to the adoption of LEDs in the country.

How are your India products different from those you export?
There are different requirements and different power conditions all across the world. As a company, we adhere to all legal and social obligations where ever we export. In India, the power conditions are erratic and this requires certain modifications to suit the local demand.

What sectors in India generate demand for LED lighting?
LED lighting technology is at a nascent stage in India, but gaining momentum. Currently the conversion is driven by amount of usage (24-hour applications are most preferred), due to the immediate returns on investment. LED lighting is still very expensive and therefore return on investments (RoIs) will come in from typical energy guzzlers like commercial spaces, retail, hospitality and healthcare sector as well as outdoor lighting. The streetlights sector has also seen a major movement in this space.

Today, the percentage of home buyers for LEDs is still low due to high costs but according to a report by McKinsey, 70% of lighting will become LED based by 2020, so we are hopeful of adoption by this category as well.

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Could you tell us about some initiatives that NTL Lemnis has taken to promote LED lighting in India?
We believe that increasing visibility in the market will require rigorous use of both above the line (ATL) and below the line (BTL) activities. Conventional ATL activities like print, media, outdoor and online advertisements will help in creating brand awareness and increasing brand presence in the market. While BTL activities like participating in seminars, conferences and exhibitions will help us reach the target audience directly

Any new technologies we can expect from your company in the near future?
One is lighting automation for both indoor and outdoor lighting of commercial and residential space. We are working on the technology aspect of remote phosphor and believe that it will give us unprecedented design freedom to be incorporated in our LED products and would provide almost 30% higher system efficacy compared to conventional LED lighting designs.

Tell us something about your global facilities.
NTL group has seven manufacturing facilities in Noida and Dehradun. We have our sales offices in Netherlands and South Africa to take care of our interest in the European and African markets. CW