

Aztec Fluids & Machinery: issues in managing growth in India

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Introduction

April 3, 2011. Shlok read his partner's mail again. With the barely concealed excitement of an innovator gloating over his latest success, he was already counting numbers. After all, the price differential between a conventional flat-bed screen printing machine and this one would be too huge for the market to ignore, he thought. Pulin had just e-mailed his success at converting a flexible roll type printer into a flat-bed one. This was the project, he had embarked upon a couple of days ago, when he flew into New Delhi to a customer's site in response to the latter's query. The improvisation (research and development (R&D), or, better still, co-creation would be the more suitable descriptions) had yielded fruit and the beta-testing could be formally taken into its next phase of scaling up. This would involve monitoring the print quality for variation and comparing against the tolerance limits for various applications. Success in this improvisation means opening up of a huge market that requires printing on products such as ceramic tiles and glass sheets. The major irritant seemed to be the price of the available solutions – flat-bed screen printers for such applications came in at around INR 2.5 million [1], each and the cost-conscious makers of tiles and glass were not prone to such high investments unless volumes were guaranteed. Here was an experimentation that could reduce the capital investment to almost one-fifth of the currently available solution. And, based on his market information, Shlok believed this was a first in India.

As he kept thinking about the possibilities such a development offered to him and similar small firms that dot the Indian printing landscape, Shlok could almost sense a feeling of *déjà vu*. After all, it was the discovery of a "niche" opportunity that had led him to propose the idea of leaving fairly comfortable jobs in multi-national companies and to pool in their experiences and competencies. That was over four years ago. Now, would this development signal a "take-off" stage for their firm? The firm had been a bit player in the digital inkjet printing sub-segment of the vast printing industry for a while now. Is this development a signal to take their firm to the next level of growth?