

DesignTech Systems: Propelling Engineering Excellence with Latest Technologies

Founded in 1998 with the objective to make CAD/CAM software accessible to the SME segment, DesignTech Systems is today a well-known name in the engineering services field. With 10 offices and a strong customer base of over 2,200 clients, the company has established a firm grounding. In an interview with Engineering Review, Vikas Khanvelkar, Chairman & Managing Director, DesignTech Systems shares the company's growth journey, its success mantra and future vision and plans. Excerpts:



**Mr. Vikas Khanvelkar, Chairman & Managing Director,
DesignTech Systems**

Q. Please take us through the journey of DesignTech. What was your idea behind establishing the company?

Initially CAD/CAM systems were very expensive. Only large companies could buy them. During 1997-98, Windows as a platform became stable and popular. Solutions previously costing Rs 40-50 Lakh were now available under Rs 5 lakh with Windows platform, making them affordable for small and medium companies. I saw an opportunity there with price-point coming down. Also, I felt that CAD/CAM systems are required even more by SMEs due to the absence of skilled manpower.

Hence, I founded DesignTech Systems in 1998 to offer products and software previously available on UNIX, on Windows to make them accessible to the SME segment. We initially started from the Western region and we were very successful right from the start. In the initial year, we sold over a crore worth of software and completed more than 20-30 installations. We then expanded our presence in Northern region and slowly became pan-India.

Q. Tell us about your initial struggle/challenges and how did you overcome the challenges?

During the time we started CAD was available in 2D, since our product was 3D we had to put in

considerable efforts in convincing the organizations to adopt our software. As we were majorly targeting the SME segment, it was challenging to get them on-board as this segment is very prudent in its investments and expenditure. We worked with them, demonstrated the business value of the product and showed success stories. We also arranged seminars and collective meets to showcase the advantages of our products. Also, we promised the customers that we will provide training in the software and support them in deriving the optimal RoI.

We started training their existing staff, as well as students in engineering colleges. We worked towards promoting 3D modelling as a training option among students. To increase familiarity with our software, we worked on the lines that every graduating engineer should have heard and have been trained on our software. So, with this model we addressed the entire ecosystem training institutes started buying the software, students started learning it and with availability of trained staff and use cases, more and more companies started using our software.

Q. How much have you grown and expanded since establishment in terms of operations, number of employees, etc.?

We started with a small office space with three people and have come a long way since then. Today, we have 10 offices in India and subsidiaries in the US, Germany, Hong Kong and Singapore and have a strong team of 1,000 employees. We recently acquired a plot in Hinjewadi, wherein we will be constructing a new office space spread over an area of 1,00,000 square feet.

Q. Which industries do you cater to? Please share some interesting application areas?

We work with companies across automotive, aerospace and defense, industrial machinery, heavy engineering, consumer goods and electronics, and power and energy segments and support them in their most complex and challenging engineering initiatives.

We have several interesting case studies and customer success stories that demonstrate our customer-focused approach. For instance, we made valuable contributions in an internationally recognized multi-countries collaborative project of building world's first nuclear fusion reactor. Our involvement panned across and expanded beyond the stipulated sub-systems engineering design and advance CAE validation, traversing into the specialised area of geometric tolerances studies and fixtures design for achieving greater structural robustness.

We also helped IFB Home Appliances integrate its design and prototyping efforts and reduce the time to market with FDM technology. Another interesting success story that I would like to highlight is our collaboration with North America-based leading industrial radiator manufacturer to optimize their radiator design and provide design-for-manufacturing assistance to their manufacturing counterparts in North America and China.

Q. Comment on how the demands of customers have evolved over time. How is DesignTech meeting these requirements/expectations to ensure customer satisfaction

At DesignTech, ever since our inception in 1998, we have been working closely with the Mechanical Engineering industry in India, helping them make a transition from traditional processes of yesterday to adopting the latest technologies to match the global standards of engineering excellence.

Today, customers are looking at automation and dashboards and want to know what is happening on their machine, what is the productivity, uptime of the machine. We have some of the advanced CAE solutions, 3D Printing or Additive Manufacturing Technologies, latest CAD and PLM solutions from global leaders for the industries that would help companies attain their goals of product design and manufacturing excellence. These technologies would help them remain competitive and relevant in the fast-changing market space by enabling them to augment productivity, generate greater RoI and achieve higher cost effectiveness.

Q. In your observation, are customers in India ready to adopt trends, such as AI, IoT and Industry 4.0?

When we started selling 3D printing technology in India, the install base of 3D printers in the country was less than 50. In seven years since we started selling, we have sold more than 350 machines.

In today's competitive world, technology is seen as an enabler and the adoption curve is shorter. While technologies, such as AI, IoT and Industry 4.0 are at a nascent stage of adoption in India, as more and more use cases come to light, the adoption is bound to accelerate. Currently, there is a demand for dashboard view as organizations want to gain insights into details, such as machine uptime, service dashboards, spares availability, to name a few. It's only time that organizations will start exploring other applications areas and benefits of these technologies. Of course, lots of training and investments need to be done in the space.

Q. Please tell us about challenges and opportunities in India in your segment.

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In Indian companies, decision making is very slow. Sometimes it takes one year, two year or even longer to close a deal and get the order. Secondly, all Indian companies are price sensitive, so to convince them to experiment and adopt newer technologies and solutions remains a challenge.

In terms of opportunities, the adoption of CAD in India is at 80%, adoption of CAE is 50-60%, adoption of PLM is 30% and adoption of AI is less than 10%, so there is a huge headroom for us. Also, with government's initiatives, such as Make in India, there are huge growth opportunities for the manufacturing sector. Manufacturing in India across all domains and industry sectors is expected to grow big, which will require equal support – quality and quantity wise from the Machine Tools and Die and Mould industry.

We have already started to witness this growth momentum. The last fiscal quarter already saw industry in India touching a little over 8% productivity

and growth rate. With all these sectors expected to experience tremendous boom, the tooling and mould and die industry will thrive on this growth opportunity.

Q. What would you describe as your USP? How do you stand out from the competition?

We are a customer-focused company dedicated to meeting the requirements of the customer and help them derive ROI from their investment. We primarily offer value for money for our customers. This is the reason we have continued to grow and expand over the years, even during the time of recession. The number of our repeat customers is also high.

Q. Tell us about initiatives taken by DesignTech in bridging skills gap in India.

Skilling is our very big initiative and we focus on this extensively through our DesignTech Edu division. We have started 11 Centers

of Excellences (CoEs) in Gujarat, 40 CoEs in erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, 6 CoEs in Jharkhand, 6 CoEs in Tamil Nadu and 4 CoEs in Karnataka. We train more than 1 lakh students every year in the latest technologies and make them employment ready. We focus on CAD, CAE, PLM, additive manufacturing and IoT technologies. We, at DesignTech, will continue to work with industry and academia to better align students with industry requirements and prepare them for Industry 4.0 era.

Q. What is your future vision and growth plans?

Our vision is to work with the latest technologies and help Indian companies adopt them at large scale. We have established a firm grounding in India and see significant demand in the local market. Now, we plan to focus on exports too. Our aim is to increase our export percentage in service revenue from current 25% to 50% in the next three years. ■

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