

Craning the Future: Hydrolift Cranes' path to global prominence



Clifford Sanctis, Managing Director, Hydrolift

Hydrolift Cranes, a prominent player in the material handling equipment industry, has achieved noteworthy success in the Indian market, particularly in the construction and defense sector. Clifford Sanctis, the Managing Director of Hydrolift, shares insights into the company's core products, diverse applications, and market penetration strategies in an exclusive interview with Rajesh Rajgor.

Hydrolift Cranes made its foray into the market of knuckle boom cranes in 2016, embarking on a journey marked by consistent growth and a commitment to innovation. Clifford reflects on the origins, stating, "It all started with T-cranes and small cranes with capacities ranging from 1 ton meter to 8-ton meter cranes."

Demonstrating a steadfast dedication to research and development, Hydrolift introduced new crane models with capacities ranging from 11-ton meter to 24-ton meter in the past. Clifford provides a glimpse into the future, revealing plans for even higher capacity models, stating, "The efforts continue to go for higher models of cranes like 32-ton meter till 48-ton meter in the coming months. Now the designs are complete and are waiting for proto and testing."

Construction Growth Strategy & Defense Triumph

Addressing the burgeoning demand in the construction industry for specialized cranes in tunnel works, bridge construction, and flyovers, Clifford emphasizes the advantage of material handling equipment. He states, "The Indian market is growing as there is a demand

for increasing productivity, hence, material handling equipment has an added advantage over the conventional handling of material."

A pivotal moment for Hydrolift occurred in the last two years when the company successfully entered the defense segment. Clifford notes, "We were well accepted as manufacturers of knuckle boom cranes, replacing the imported products that were currently being used. The Make in India program further propelled demand in the OEMs, defense and railway sectors, aligning with Hydrolift's commitment to continuous innovation and customization to meet specific customer needs."

To meet the surging demand, Hydrolift has outlined strategic plans for expansion, encompassing increased production capacity, automation, enhanced product quality, and additional manpower. Clifford details recent investments in technology, saying, "Recently, we have invested in a high-definition plasma cutting machine and a horizontal boring machine. These investments aim to boost production capacity from 750 to 2000-3000 cranes per annum, underscoring Hydrolift's commitment



to scaling up operations.”

Excelling Globally with Award-Winning Innovation

Hydrolift’s commitment to excellence extends beyond cranes to include tail lifts, skip loaders, wheelchair lifts, and recovery vehicles. Clifford emphasizes the continuous efforts of the Research and Development team, stating, “The R&D team is continuously striving to improve the design and incorporate additional features with IoT, artificial intelligence, in the crane, which can cater to the demands of the international market as well as target the niche local market.”

Recognition for Hydrolift’s dedication to excellence manifested in the form of the Best Innovation Supplier Gold Award from Ashok Leyland in June 2023. Clifford proudly mentions, “We could develop and deliver the cranes in a record time of 8 months, which in a normal scenario takes almost 18-24 months.” This recognition solidifies Hydrolift’s position as a leading player in the industry.

Quality assurance is paramount in Hydrolift’s manufacturing, with meticulous material selection, including high-tensile steel. Rigorous testing, such as 1 lakh cycle tests and 300-hours salt sprays, underlines the commitment to durability and reliability. Looking ahead, Hydrolift is poised to obtain the CE marking, emphasizing their commitment to globalizing their products. Clifford emphasizes, “Being Indian, India should be shown in the global market as a quality crane manufacturer. This aligns with the company’s goal of balancing global expansion while meeting the demands of the Indian market.”

In addition to product excellence, Hydrolift places a strong emphasis on creating a safe and environmentally friendly production facility. Clifford states, “Focus is on creating a production facility that is ecologically sustainable and safe by using biologically degradable oils and lubricants, controlling minimal waste disposal, recycling waste, and creating awareness within the organization toward achieving a healthy, safe, and environmentally friendly organization.”

Versatile Solutions for Diverse Industries

Hydrolift’s product range spans various applications, including truck-mounted cranes for industries like brick, steel, construction, metros, defense, and railways. The cranes come with a range of attachments designed for specific applications, showcasing versatility and efficiency. Sanctis emphasizes the importance of attachments, stating, “Every crane we are using can lift different materials using the attachments.”

He details the extensive range of attachments, such as log grabs for wood applications, brick grabs for the brick industry, pallet forks for lifting pallets, polygrabs for waste management, clamshells for materials like sand, sugar, or iron ore, winches with ropes for specific applications, and augers for drilling holes. The cranes are not limited to lifting alone but find diverse applications in defense, railways, and other sectors.

Regarding market penetration, Clifford outlines the strong presence of Hydrolift in the brick industries, metros, Indian railways, and the defense sector, especially in handling ammunitions. “Looking ahead, Hydrolift aims to develop

larger cranes for handling missiles, bridges, composite bridges, steel rolls, and transformers, catering to diverse sectors like road projects,” he shares.

Acknowledging the challenges posed by the scarcity of skilled hydraulic resources in India, Clifford emphasizes the need for training new engineers and the continuous effort required for employee retention. He highlights the lack of specialized hydraulic education in Indian colleges and the necessity to bring in European experts for training.

Automation, Innovation, and Global Excellence In terms of production, Hydrolift is making strides towards automation. Clifford mentions their move towards increased automation in processes like plasma cutting and welding. The company is planning to implement robotic welding and automated paint booths, aiming for a fully automated factory by the end of 2025.

Hydrolift’s commitment to quality is evident in its in-house design, manufacturing, and testing processes. Clifford emphasizes, “Our use of high-tensile steel for crane manufacturing, results in lightweight yet powerful cranes. We conduct extensive testing, including 1 lakh cycle tests, to ensure durability and reliability.”

Looking forward, Hydrolift aims to showcase its attachment-focused approach at EXCON 2023, highlighting the versatility of its cranes for various applications. The company’s focus remains on expanding production capacity, increasing automation, enhancing product quality, and making a mark in the global market.

Aiming Big - Hydrolift’s Ambitious Vision

Clifford expresses the company’s vision for the future, aiming to be one of the best crane manufacturers globally,

focusing on quality, innovation, and a comprehensive product range. He reveals, “We intent on expanding the product line to higher capacity cranes, reaching up to 120-ton meters, and putting India on the global map as a prominent crane manufacturer.”

Hydrolift Cranes, envisions an impressive manufacturing feat—producing 10 cranes daily, highlighting a dual focus on both domestic and international markets. “Our dream is to be one of the best crane manufacturers globally,” says Clifford. Maintaining equilibrium, 40% of Hydrolift’s production is exported to countries like the Pan-Asian, East European, Middle East and North Africa. With headquarters in Oman and a branch in Dubai, the company strategically positions itself for global outreach.

Hydrolift’s manufacturing excellence is evident in its two existing plants; Khalapur excels in medium and large cranes, while Satara specializes in child parts and small cranes. The company aims to establish a fully automated factory by 2025, showcasing its commitment to innovation and efficiency in manufacturing. Clifford adds, “Quality doesn’t come overnight. It is an intelligent and conscious effort.”

Hydrolift Cranes is navigating the challenges and opportunities in the Indian market with a strategic approach, innovation, and a commitment to quality. As they continue to grow and expand, the company’s focus on automation, skilled workforce development, and global market presence positions them as a key player in the material handling industry.

