

AFTERMARKET AUTO LOGISTICS:

N O M O R E A N A F T E R T H O U G H T

Spare parts' logistics aims at a demand-driven, cost-minimal provision of the required spare parts for the maintenance of primary products to ensure an optimal level of availability or reliability of the product.

Given the fact that aftermarket business creates better margins, aftermarket activities are high on every company's agenda at the moment in our country.

Joydeep Banik *talks to experts to know more about the current scenario of the spare parts and aftermarket logistics and discusses the measures required to streamline the supply chain with inventory management*



Traditionally, the distribution and sales of spare parts has always happened through a well-established network of receiving parts from vendors/manufacturing plants into a warehouse, supplied to distributors, in turn to retailers and subsequently to the end-user. The automotive aftermarket has gained increasing attention recently. Companies are nowadays seeking for new methods and solutions to provide the best possible service to the customers through the most efficient ways. Efficiently implemented spare parts' logistics management can differentiate a business from its competitors, lower costs, increase revenues, and help firms generate greater value.

Firms across different industries now recognise spare parts' distribution as a chance to offset stagnation and to increase profits in the primary product markets. For instance, the after-sales business in the machine and plant construction industry accounts for approximately 25 per cent of the total sales (with two-thirds from selling spare parts and one-third from services). Aftermarket is seen as a strategic opportunity by large brands as it enables companies to build up loyalty and tight bonds with their customers and create repeated sales on the products they have already sold.

Rapid industrialisation has seen the widespread growth of commercial manufacturing enterprise in the Indian automotive industry. Accurate and timely visibility, process expertise and understanding the intricacies involved in managing the physical movement of goods and inventory in the automotive aftermarket supply chain are some of the acute challenges within the aftermarket. This article tries to highlight the important metrics in the automotive aftermarket, that is, standardising activities through stabilising the lead-times, providing proactive approach to the problems, looking upon inventory as a necessary part of the supply chain to satisfy end-customers and establishing incentives to support the availability of parts where they are needed.

More Than Just Nuts and Bolts

Spare parts are an important feature of logistics engineering and often, dedicated spare parts management systems are needed to keep production activities streamlined. Direct distribution and sales of spare parts is becoming more and more important for the automotive market, more so, for the Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM). According to a study, the spare parts' market is lucrative with a huge potential, but the share of OEMs is as low as 15 to 25 per cent. Some examples of OEMs getting into the space is Maruti with Maruti Genuine Parts, and Mahindra & Mahindra with Mahindra e-Spares.

Speaking on the issue, **R Shankar, CEO, TVSLSL India** says, "Spares distribution is very important to OEMs, as service delivery, especially one at an affordable cost is one of the key determinants of the customer's choice of brand/model. With product differentiation and technological differences getting increasingly blurred in recent times, customer service will be a key deciding factor. And for an automotive OEM to excel in customer service, logistics and availability of spares play a crucial role."

S Natarajan, Head-Logistics and Transportation, Tata Motors agrees, "Firstly, while spare parts' revenue is small in proportion compared to vehicle sales, availability of the parts at various nodes is one of the main drivers for vehicle sales. Secondly, no other link can play an integrator role better than an OEM. Hence, OEM has to assume a bigger role. Else, it will break at a link where it is stressed. It is very important to provide 'win' to every link. There has to be win for vendor, warehouse, transporter, distributor, retailer and of course to the end user. There has to be win for OEM as well. If there is no 'win-win', there will be either 'lose-win' or 'lose-lose'. 'Lose-lose' is an immediate failure and 'win-lose' is a failure in the long term, if not today. Visibility of the entire chain is much more to OEM and hence it is The maker or breaker of the chain."

Jasjit Sethi, President and CEO, TCI SCS feels that there is a huge growth potential of the Indian automobile aftermarket as he says, "The Indian aftermarket is a function of the vehicle park for the OEM, the distribution network (both formal and informal) and the response time promised by the OEM

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to its consumers. While almost all the global companies have a presence in the Indian automotive market, the size is small and not demonstrative of the future potential given the mobility requirements for 1.3 billion people."

The availability of spares and service can influence the purchase decisions of new automobile owners. Speaking on the issue, Natarajan says, "The company cannot afford to lose sight of core business. At the same time, it has to make use of the channel partners who are good in their core area of distribution and selling. However, 'any part anywhere at any time' can't be compromised. End-user tolerance over 'waiting for parts' is diminishing over a period. He/she switches loyalty. In order to be



R Shankar, CEO, TVSLSL India

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sensitive to the end user requirement and to be in a position to retain the existing customer base, the supply chain has to be more agile. When an entire range of parts can't be made available through retailers, the only option available is direct distribution. In our view, this has already gained importance and establishing a direct channel is a matter of time which would complement the existing established distribution channel. This will help the end-user and all linkages in the supply chain." **Gautam Dembla, CEO, Spear Logistics** begs to differ because he is "not sure how direct selling of spare parts would work, as reaching each consumer without a dealer or distributor network is extremely challenging."

Neelum Singh, Senior Consultant, ARC Advisory Services renders an elaborate outlook, "Though the vehicles are serviced, it is less likely that they are serviced at an organised service centre with an original part. With the openness insisted by Competition Commission of India (CCI), car companies are compelled to put an effective system in place to make the spare parts and diagnostic tools easily available in the open market for customers and independent repairers. This is an upcoming trend in the spare parts market. From the business perspective, this is encouraging because it:

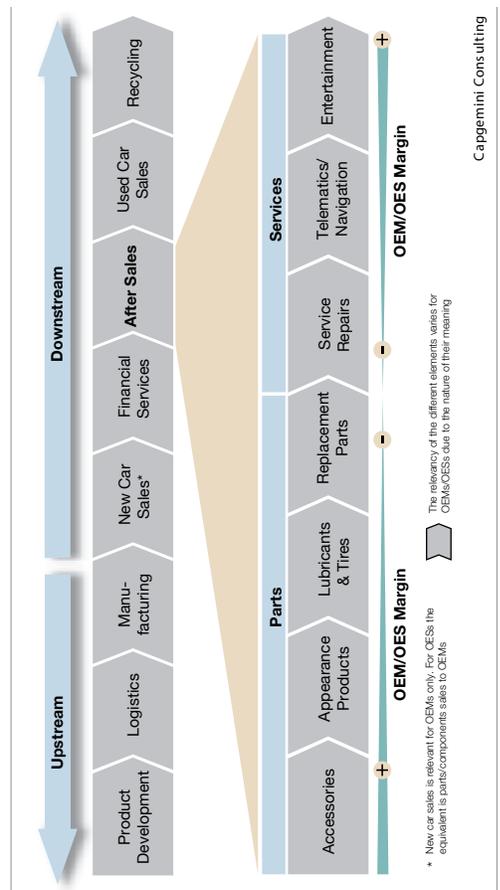
- Brings in Competitive Advantage.
- Provides Faster, Better and Effective Service."

The manufacturing models in the competitive market are ever changing. The automotive industry is experiencing significant changes with rising input costs on account of competition and R&D. Car makers are nowadays reducing the number of platforms that their cars are built on and reducing the installed capacity. However,

selling or shutting down plants may take years as resistance builds from local governments and populace. **Sushil Rathi, COO, Mahindra Logistics** says, "The automotive spares industry has had a unique relationship with the automobile industry. In the recent slowdown of the industry, the spares industry continued to be in demand as end consumers could no longer afford to buy newer cars frequently and had to invest in maintaining their existing cars through spares replacement and repairs. And now, when the Indian automobile industry is witnessing a healthy growth due to various government initiatives, improved consumer sentiment, and increased purchasing power, the automotive spares industry has a booming demand as well." He continues, "The growth in aftermarket e-tailing has revolutionised the spares distribution process. It has increased the availability of spare parts to the end consumer multifold, and has necessitated higher service levels and faster deliveries. It has also given rise to new network models like direct distribution from suppliers to retailers. With the entry of multi-brand retailers like Mahindra First Choice both online and offline, spares distribution is no longer a monopoly of a select few."

Man Singh Chauhan, General Manager, Supply Chain Solutions, Freight Systems opines, "Every vehicle manufacturer knows the importance of aftermarket service. Dealers demand overnight – if not same day delivery; a vehicle off the road means not only an unhappy dealer, but a consumer who might well choose a different manufacturer the next time they replace their vehicle. To provide the necessary quality of aftermarket service, carmakers need to have a well-organised and managed warehouse with the right amount of inventory in the

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right place at all times – and it takes a tremendous amount of thought, analysis, planning and care to create and maintain the optimum facility.”

Warehouse and Inventory Management

Automotive OEMs work with numerous partners for sourcing of products on the inbound side and with various distributors and retailers on the outbound side. Maintaining a balance between the inbound and outbound part of the supply chain is, therefore, extremely necessary. Highlighting on this area, Rathi says, “If inbound logistics exceeds outbound, it will lead to higher inventory levels in the spares warehouse thereby increasing problems like obsolescence of stock, increased inventory costs, inefficient utilisation of warehouse space etc. And if outbound logistics exceeds inbound, there is a risk of being out of stock and thus, not being able to meet consumer demand and expectations. Hence, managing the balance between inbound and

outbound logistics in aftermarket logistics is of paramount importance.”

Singh points out, “Inconsistent supplies still remain a major concern area for most OEMs. Spare parts requirement is often competing with OEM assembly line requirements and adequate vendor capacity. Unless OEMs help its suppliers de-bottleneck its processes, the balance between inbound and outbound cannot be achieved. An integrated supply chain for visibility into the supplier’s inventory and an insight into the downstream demand will create a balance in the supply chain.”

Natarajan adds a somewhat different angle to this as he says, “Logistics helps to move parts from one link to the next in supply chain. The role of logistics is very critical as it carries ‘inventory cost’ on the move, if we look internally, and also carries agility and serviceability, if we look from the market perspective. We need to strike a balance between cost and serviceability (balance does not mean compromise on both the pa-

rameters). We try aggregating from suppliers to warehouse and warehouse to regional warehouse and segregating from regional warehouse to channel partners. The essence is not to lose speed-to-market.”

According to Shankar, “The suppliers for the spare parts and production parts are most often common—thereby there is joint collection of parts for both the purposes, along with combined consolidation and delivery to the OEMs. In some cases, outbound logistics is managed with the ‘backhaul’ of these vehicles, at least to the regional and state level spares delivery centres. Of course, the network maybe separate for managing the last-mile of distribution of spares to the dealers and distributors.”

Speaking on the current market scenario, Chauhan says, “The aftermarket ecosystem is complicated and involves several stakeholders, including OEMs, part suppliers, logistics providers, the dealer network, service points and general spare part distributors. Parts are sourced in bulk from parts suppliers, transported and then stored and managed in central warehouses, often termed ‘mother warehouses’ in India, or ‘source warehouse’ elsewhere. Following dealer orders and inventory management, the parts are then moved to regional hubs in repackaged, ready-to-sell retail merchandise packaging, and transported at the shortest possible time to the needy dealer. Technology plays a vital role by enhancing the visibility in the entire value chain by using advanced and automated warehouse management system like RFID, Bar Code systems.” He believes that “GST implementation will give major boost to the industry wherein the entire supply chain model will get revamped with relocation of mother warehouses, regional warehouses and satellite warehouses within the country considering customers business model and



Sushil Rathi, COO, Mahindra Logistics

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requirements to cater an efficient service levels and cost of operating warehouse and reduced transportation lead time.”

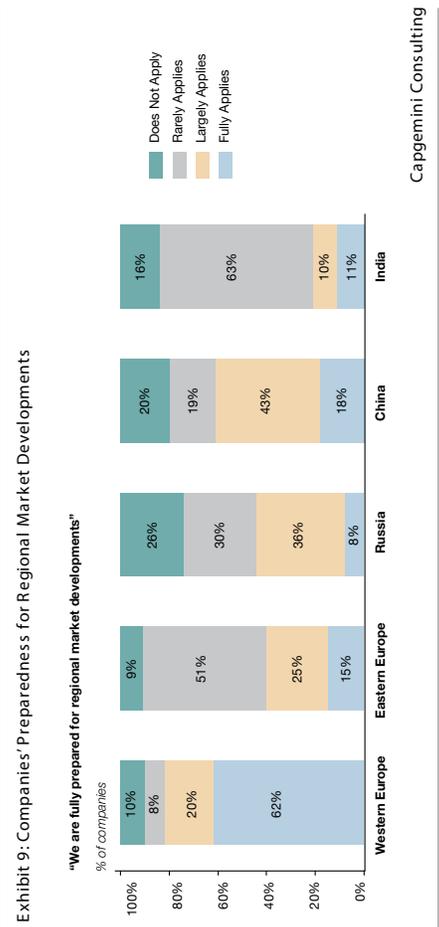
Sethi realises the significance of inventory management as he says, “In common parlance, the aftermarket spare parts warehouses work on a model of categorisation of inventory on two metrics – FSN (Fast, Slow and Non-Moving parts) and ABC, which is a categorisation of the highest throughput by a part (part x Qty sold), along with statutory compliances for 7-10 years after the last model is rolled out. In this scenario, the logistics works on a principle of warehouses carrying some stock for the ABC stocks and requisition for more based on sale, a process called replenishment. These parts may also be replicated downstream at the distributors and dealers.” He adds, “There may be some barn goods (deep storage for the non-moving parts) that are present at all warehouses of any one nearest to the vendor (the supplier). Typically a supplier will need a Min Order Quantity (MOQ) for providing stocks for any SKU (Stock Keeping Unit). In such cases, there may be a higher inventory of some parts for some time or this may be distributed across the chain. Overall, most OEMs run a balanced network and have evolved their own algorithms for ensuring a balance of stocks.”

Right warehousing plays a key role in spare part distribution. When an automobile parts dealer or a business in the auto service parts retail network places a request to its upstream suppliers for order fulfilment, the expectation is to get the right component at the right place, within the right time frame, at an affordable cost. To provide the necessary quality of aftermarket service, a well-organised and managed warehouse with the right amount of inventory in the right place at all times is a must. Speaking on the issue, Natarajan says, “Warehousing is very critical

in distribution beyond a shade of doubt. It does not hold parts, it holds future revenue for the company. It provides a cushion for a steady stream of revenue with minimum loss of opportunity for sale. It provides serviceability strength. Firstly, in a typical food bazaar, the customer picks the desired quantity of what he/she wants and he/she becomes responsible for any wrong pick or short/excess pick. Warehouses, on the contrary, have a team to pick parts on behalf of ‘next link’. The right quantity and right part is very crucial. If this is missed/ messed, then the customer is dissatisfied.

Secondly, a warehouse has to be cost-effective. When we say cost effective, we aren’t talking about cutting cost. There are various elements in a warehouse. Those elements for which the customer is willing to pay for are ‘cost.’ For rest of the elements, it is a ‘waste.’ Various cost elements are rental (or owned) premises, equipment (technology) and people. Except the latter to some extent, the former two are to be locked over a longer duration. Companies don’t have the flexibility to scale up or down capacity at will at short notice. The major drivers of these cost elements are size, location and technology to be deployed in and as a warehouse.”

Discussing more on the key aspects of spare parts’ warehousing, Natarajan adds, “Location of a warehouse plays an important role. In our view, we need to be nearer to vendors of parts. This will help to cut down the manufacturing and transportation lead time. Also, this will help in consolidating the load and receive into the warehouse. The warehouse decouples vendor and market place and hence manufacturing lead time is crashed to almost near zero. Thus, by going near the vendor, we are actually going faster to market with a cost advantage which can be passed to market. This can be a clear competitive advantage coupled with other cru-



Spare parts and servicing in automobile business may not in itself be a high margin business, but it definitely impacts the top line. This trend will further grow in India with the impact of GST.



Man Singh Chauhan, General Manager, Supply Chain Solutions, Freight Systems

Best service at lowest cost is the key challenge for all players within the entire spare parts supply chain. Logex Service & Aftermarket Logistics solutions support spare parts and reverse logistics needs. We combine our global coverage, transportation network and experience in spare parts and reverse logistics to provide valuable solutions to our customers.



cial parameters. After finalising the location at macro level, one has to look at micro level issues like road/air connectivity, ease of people availability, social and legal aspects, etc.

Technology is another element which plays a key role; do we need high-rise building, do we need automatic storage and retrieval system, what profile of parts are we planning to store, are these fast moving; if all are fast moving parts, do we need to increase the length and breadth of a warehouse rather than going high, do we need pick and put to light, do we need 'transparent' warehouse, which part is where at what stage, do we need a green warehouse, how to make process error proofing...various decisions have to be made. The tipping point is customer delight at affordable cost."

Singh believes, "Warehousing for spare parts is very crucial in order to be in business and serve its customers better. Warehousing for spare parts include location, design, management, transportation proximity and technology usage. According to her, the various factors that influence the optimisation of warehouses are:

Location

- Penetration in the local market
- Lifecyle of the product sold

- Proximity from the nearest market
- Managing the warehouse directly vs outsourcing

Size

- Number of SKUs
- Number of distribution centres catered

Technology usage

- Use of warehouse management software
- Use of warehouse automation and controls equipment
- Voice picking, RFID enabled pallets

Shankar more or less summarises, "The location of the warehouse must form a balance between the nearness to the final consumption market, the transportation network (to manage and deliver the same within the required TAT times) and the inventory holding norms at the consumption point and the warehouses. Besides location, size plays a crucial role as the warehouses need to cater not only to the current requirements but also need to have the capacity to expand to meet the requirements for the next ten years at least. Use of technology in the warehouses should be appropriate for easy location, identification, retrieval and error free dispatch within the fastest possible time and at economical costs."

Warehousing is considered as different material handling activities which are performed in a factory's warehouse. These activities include all types of inbound and outbound processes such as receiving, binning, picking and shipping. Dembla tries to enlighten more on technology usage and other innovations in warehouses, "Spear uses technology within its material handling and processing systems at various warehouses based on its customer requirements. The warehouses are designed with customers' requirements and will in all likelihood be a dedicated facility. There are huge complexities that have to be considered in designing such facilities such as storage systems, material handling, warehouse management software, number of transactions to be handled, their inventory levels, turnaround, dwell time, etc. Depending on the size of market, each customer would need to think of his distribution centre structures. A luxury car-maker, for instance, may need a DC in say, Mumbai, that can meet its dealer's requirements, as they would be located primarily in tier 1 cities and concentrated in the west, north and south. A commercial vehicle maker would need a hub-and-spoke model or a regional DC model with at least four DCs across the country. There is a fair amount of automation that is being implemented in aftermarket warehouses in India as well, even though our labour costs are substantially cheaper than the West. Companies realise that it does not make sense to have 'depots' in every state as this only increases the inventory and brings in a lot of inefficiencies."

Meeting Service Level Expectations with New Developments

Spare parts logistics is very often viewed as a showcase field. Despite the growing variety of products and their individual parts, spare



Jasjit Sethi, President and CEO, TCI SCS

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parts must frequently be provided in after-sales service on a short notice and flexible basis. In the process, special demands are placed on both the supplier and the recipient. A long and unstable lead time which is a result of bottlenecks in the processes, both in warehouse operations and at the suppliers end, creates instability of the delivery schedules and influences the parts' availability to a great extent.

There is a fair bit of confusion regarding the service level expectations of the customers in the Indian automobile aftermarket. Dembla clarifies, "We work with a lot of large auto part customers and have never come across any customer who would accept service levels of 80 per cent. As long as I can remember, our customers' expectations have always been in the high 90s with regard to order fills and delivery and the contract logistics industry can deliver these levels. There are challenges on the delivery side especially in B class town and rural areas where service levels would fall to about 75 – 80 per cent. But as far as processing and shipping the parts out of distribution centres goes, I can tell you that service levels are in the high 90s and even close to international benchmarks. There have been a few factors that have brought about this improvement in service quality. Companies earlier saw the aftermarket business as a kind of obligation to provide their customers with spares when it was desperately needed. Then they saw that there was an opportunity to make money and thereby improve service levels. This awareness of course came when competition increased and forced everyone to play on the same level playing field. Automotive manufacturers now don't mind paying a bit more to ensure that they have a better supply and delivery chain."

Normally 3PL service providers manage all activities at the spare parts warehouses

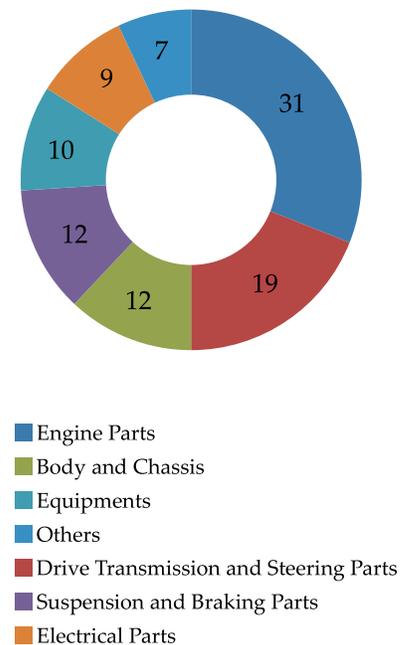
including receiving, put away, binning, picking, packing and dispatch which also include all physical documentation requirements and management of the entire process through the OEMs IT system of the 3PL's own IT system. With the increased focus on technology usage, the day is not far when we will see e-commerce playing a major part in the aftermarket, both through platforms such as Amazon or by direct OEMs with the new FDI relations for manufacturers. Singh discusses the major trends affecting the Indian aftermarket.

- Get into the spare parts business aggressively
- Develop a multi-tiered service centre system
- Use pull based distribution with an integrated IT operation
- Three-dimensional (3D) printing.
- IoT enablement.
- Augmented Reality

Chauhan also gives his perspective on the recent market trends in spare parts' logistics:

- The spare parts business is considered the main driver to enhance customer satisfaction and generate repurchase opportunities: As the proportion of additional sales and replacements has gradually increased, customers have begun paying more attention to the quality of after-sales services, which directly affect their purchase decisions. The importance of after-sales service and spare parts operations to overall automotive sales is becoming increasingly obvious
- Along with the rapid growth of the after-sales market, the spare parts business will soon become another major revenue source for OEMs: As auto market's Car Parc undergoes exponential growth and the market's average vehicle age rises, revenues contributed to OEMs by services and spare parts business are growing rapidly. Services and spare parts busi-

Chart 2.2: Product range- Share of products in FY12 (%)



Source: Annual Report ACMA FY12

The automotive industry is experiencing significant changes with rising input costs on account of competition and R&D



Gautam Dembla, CEO, Spear Logistics

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ness will comprise a major new source of growth for Chinese OEMs.

Companies have realised that they should focus on their core strengths and leave activities such as warehousing and distribution to the experts. Dembla stresses this point and says, “A number of carmakers choose to use their capital in building state-of-the-art warehouses close to their plants. This works well for the larger volume mass market manufacturers as they then have scale in shipping. But they do not wish to manage these facilities as this is not what is core to their business. They are increasingly outsourcing the management of such facilities and in most cases we see that these can be quite successful. There is, of course, a need to be the coming together of both service provider and manufacturer – to think alike – if that doesn’t happen, then the consequences can be quite disastrous.”

Managing the Complexities

While spare parts logistics has been recognised as a success factor, many firms have inadequate knowledge of the strategy. An assessment of the flow of spare parts within the organisation distribution network and the expectations of customers affecting the organisation in terms of demand is therefore necessary. An ideal situation for an aftermarket auto parts logistics is an error-free movement of millions of individual parts made by manufacturers from across the world to the customers. But given the complexity of the supply chain, it is difficult to achieve. Spare parts need to be maintained for vehicles which might have been stopped manufacturing decades ago. On the other hand, the dealers and repair shops hate waiting.

According to Dembla, “Key to Service Parts business is availability of the part at the right time at the right place. Service promise to the dealer is the main driver. To switch from, say a two-day dispatch from DC

to next day, the warehouse needs to change its way of functioning. In our warehouses, we were earlier picking by dealer order. This required us to go to the same storage locations multiple times in a day. Imagine the manpower that was needed for this. We could not sustain such a model and provide a next-day delivery, so we switched to batch or lot picking, with the batch broken down on the workstations into individual orders. Such examples helped us to reduce our order cut-off time. It helped reduce errors in picking, manpower and costs dramatically. WMS plays a key role, right from receiving consignments to faster and more accurate put away and picks. For instance, optimisation of pick and put away paths for picking and put away help warehouses function more efficiently and at lower costs. To achieve economies of scale for one of our customers, we consolidated a warehouse. Some of their bigger dealers, who were ordering from various divisions, were getting eight different shipments at a time. Keeping track of so many orders was a challenge for the customer and his dealers. By consolidation, we reduced the number of shipments and the number of cases to dealers. There was also a considerable saving in distribution costs as a consequence. We implemented 2D bar code system at our warehouses with the help of WMS. This gave us better speed and accuracy in processing orders. Our dealers get information on contents of each box at the time of dispatch. Such steps help us work in close partnership with our customer.”

Natarajan believes that “if a strong process is set, the business becomes simple and can address the so called ‘complexity.’ The crucial thing is how to ‘execute’ the process diligently.” He also stresses on the visibility part and tries to find a solution, “The various challenges are suppliers don’t get visibility of stocks of his part supplies, he is given a



Neelum Singh, Senior Consultant, ARC Advisory Services

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fixed monthly schedule, he can't give priority to the parts which are running dry due to lack of visibility. Because of the fixed schedule, warehouses end up receiving stock though the market demand has changed. Warehouses hold what is not required now and don't hold what is required. There is an imbalance. Management reviews stock out and seek explanation; buyer procures more parts and ends up with more inventory. Management reviews inventory, and buyers are forced to retract on inventory build-up. Distributors know that company is not agile enough to supply parts, hence, they do some forecasting and place orders. The forecasting can never be accurate. Company is happy to meet the demand and this forces the distributor to carry more stock. Since he has to get cash for business, he sells at a discount. He loses profit. End user gets only fast moving parts and that too, late. He switches loyalty. By creating visibility of stocks at every node, OEM can play an integrator role. Distributors' team can get consumption from retailers. They can place what got consumed by re-

tailers instantly, rather than batching the ordering. This reduces ordering lead time. Warehouses can supply part to distributor based on their order. The parts consumption from warehouse can be ordered onto vendor. This creates pull in the system. Appropriate stocking can be done at every node considering consumption rate and lead time elements. We manage complexities by measurement of possible customer concerns before they come up and present solutions to our clients. We have structured MIS and monthly review meets specifically for each of our customers. A specialised team of industrial engineers makes processes leaner and more efficient and makes life easier for us on the shop floor. These are just a few of the steps we initiate in managing better warehouses."

Shankar is of the view that "the product life cycle of spare parts is much longer than that of the vehicles that it fits into. Complexity is brought in due to the necessity of handling large SKUs, as every manufacturer promises warranty and service support of about 10 years for their products sold. Additionally, demand for parts is relatively unstable and difficult to forecast. Most of the auto manufactures in India are yet to adopt a robust forecast system for their spare parts. All these factors pose huge challenges in inventory planning, purchasing, ordering, warehousing and logistics operations. Better control on the said challenges comes with a high cost to manage. One of the prominent factors would be supplier delivery adherence, which when not properly managed, will force OEMs to stock more. This, in turn, increases the inventory holding cost that flows through the product cost. Other difficulties include inflexible or inadequate IT system, planning and forecasting capabilities, inefficient and nonflexible warehouse management and field service efficiency."

Rathi feels, "Complexity in spares logis-

tics can be simplified to a large extent with appropriate technology solutions. It may seem like a high cost option initially, but in the long term, the benefits reaped will justify the ROI. Also, automating tedious, time-consuming and error-prone manual activities can also make the spares logistics more efficient and effective. Another important aspect would be to create a balance between service levels and costs. Different solutions are possible by optimising the mix of both. Other factors like network optimisation and better order planning can reduce the logistics complexity to a great extent.

Conclusion

Winning market share in aftermarket logistics is far from easy, since it entails significant complexity. Nowadays, large distributors for service parts reduce the cost of managing a complex dealer network across the country. This helps automotive companies to yield even better margins.

Nowadays, companies offer many different types of services in the aftermarket like product warranties, service facilities, help desks, spare parts, on-site support and product training, to name a few. Nevertheless, competing in the aftermarket supply chain is a tough task. Spare parts and servicing in automobile business may not in itself be a high margin business, but it definitely impacts the top line. This trend will further grow in India with the impact of GST leading to uniform landing cost and thus, it is beyond doubt, that the aftermarket spare parts' business is poised for accelerated growth. When an automobile parts' dealer or a business in the auto service parts retail network places a request to its upstream suppliers for order fulfilment, the expectation is to get the right component at the right place, within the right time frame, at an affordable cost and the right cards need to be played to streamline the supply chain.