

Surging ahead

Rushabh Vora, co-founder and director of SILA, one of India's fastest growing facility management companies, on their success strategy and the path ahead

What is your opinion about the status of facilities management sector in India?

Facilities management is growing rapidly, the pace of the shift in the organised players as compared to the unorganised players is increasing as well. As for the growth of the industry in the residential segment, there is a lot of potential with the increasing number of high-end residential projects.

Given that, the facility management landscape in India is undergoing a major transformation, how is the demand being addressed?

Instituting stringent processes that are easy to follow is the first step being implemented; at the same time, adopting the right technology will help service providers follow these set processes. Training and retraining manpower has always played an important role and continues to do so.

What are some of the strategies you've adopted to enhance client servicing?

We work with strategies such as:

- Keeping it simple and delivering on promises – I know this sounds clichéd but we have seen



The first-class and business lounge at CSIA T2 in Mumbai, maintained and managed by SILA.

great success by recognising our strengths and promising within our capabilities, while meeting client expectations and deliverables. Basically, 'getting the basics right and delivering what you were contracted for'.

- Using technology – we have developed a tailor-made software called SILA Connect. This allows us to track the performance of each employee, analyse the rates of our service and ensure that we stay ahead of our SLA targets at all times.



Rushabh Vora, co-founder and director, SILA.

- Established third party audit mechanism (via SILA Connect) is used to audit each of our projects and take continuous feedback from clients.

Tell us about SILA Connect...

SILA Connect has helped in many ways. Firstly, through the performance management feature, we have been able to track every individual's performance, be it an electrician working at a site in Srinagar or a janitor in New Delhi. Considering the fact that we run operations in 23 cities with over 2,500 employees, SILA Connect has been instrumental in keeping everything structured. It allows us to manage human resources at a scale that would have been impossible without sound technology. Through SILA Connect, we are also able to measure the performance of projects, manage our customers, get feedback from them and monitor progress of various verticals like procurement, operations, training, etc.



SILA partnered with a German-based company to preserve the artworks at Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport (CSIA).

CHALLENGES OF MANAGING VARIOUS PROJECTS

Terminal 2, Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport (CSIA), Mumbai

SILÄ was signed on to provide cleaning and maintenance services at Terminal 2 of Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport. The key zone to be serviced: the 3km-long wall called 'Jaya He', which displays a variety of artworks, including ancient sculptures, statues, huge wind chimes, maps made of e-waste and glass, wood and stone artefacts. "The biggest challenge," says Vora, "was putting the SOPs together as this was the first time, we were working on something like this. We, then, specially partnered with a German-based company, one of the most renowned cleaning material supplier, to preserve the artworks displayed within the open environment. We made sure that the team deployed had knowledge and experience of Museology & Conservation of Art. Looking at the value engineering done by SILÄ at 'Jaya He', we now also manage the business class lounges run by Mumbai Airport Lounge Services (MALS) at the terminal."

Adlabs Imagica, Mumbai

SILÄ began its operations at Adlabs Imagica in April 2013 and initiated services at the F&B areas of the dry theme park in April 2014. "Over the course of the next 12 months, we took over the entire park, including Aqua Imagica, and now manage the rides as well as the other areas of the park," says Vora. "SILÄ was able to create value by guiding the owners on how to implement soft services operations at the theme park. We also ensured a consistent quality of housekeeping services at the park since its gone live. We continue to ensure that a high quality of service delivery is maintained, with the focus being on training and re-training of our team on ground."

Amongst all the industry verticals, which one do you think has shown the highest growth in adopting organised facilities management?

We have seen a lot of growth in the residential and industrial space, and have been able to create immense value for our clients (while servicing these assets) over the last couple of years. Our clientele has been growing, which points to the awareness of the importance of facility management, and soon it will be at par in all the verticals.

How are you addressing the challenge of training and educating manpower?

We follow a few basic rules:

- Thorough in-house training for frontline staff, like janitors, electricians, plumbers, pool boys, HVAC operators, etc.
- Create process training manual – we have built a process training programme for mid- to senior-level staff at SILÄ. This includes an exam that every employee has to take in order to continue working with the company.
- NSDC (via Rustomjee) – we recently completed a training programme along with Rustomjee under the well-known National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) programme, and we look forward to continue and benefit from this platform.



Maintenance staff deployed at the Piramal Tower.

We have developed a tailor-made software called SILÄ Connect, which allows us to track the performance of each employee, analyse the rates of our service, and ensure that we stay ahead of our SLA targets at all times."

What are the challenges?

Pricing pressure – it's bound to happen as the market gets more and more crowded. However, I can confidently say that we have been able to stay ahead of the curve by constantly innovating and improving our operation efficiency. We have been able to offset pricing pressure from clients by doing things differently. Hence, we have continued to see marginal growth at the EBITDA level.

Currently, in India, there are negligible government regulations in place to motivate service providers. How do you think this can be changed?

I think it's already changing. It is getting harder for the unorganised players and even for organised players, to flout compliance related rules. A stringent (and fair) monitoring mechanism of existing regulations, especially compliance-related regulations, will make it harder to cheat the system. This acts as a huge motivation for companies like SILÄ. 📺