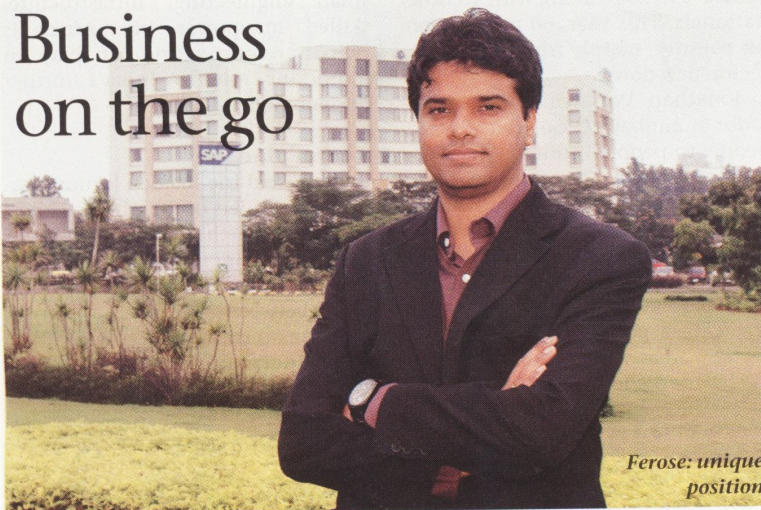


## Business on the go



Ferose: unique position

### SAP Labs helps industries find innovative solutions

In the days when the Union budget was presented in the evening and the finance minister announced a hike on the prices of petroleum products, the oil companies' tankers could not leave the depots in the morning till SAP updated the entire system and got the changes approved by its own and the companies' legal counsel. That's the kind of work the global software company, which originated in Germany nearly four decades ago as Systems Automation & Products, does around the world. "This includes internationalisation across time zones and currencies, along with localisation to fit local laws," explains Navaneet Mishra, vice-president, globalisation services, SAP Labs India. "Even across the different Indian states, it's necessary to ensure legal compliance with the state laws, as well as translation into the local language."

"That's how Labs began – from the localisation team," adds Ferose V.R., managing director. "And last year, we launched the first global product out of India." HANA, SAP's high-performance analytic appliance, is based on in-memory database computing. Enabling faster and more predictable performance, this helps especially when response time is critical. "It's an appliance model, with our box sitting next to the existing box," says Girish

Koppar, global head of development, Info Worker, SAP Labs. "HANA uses the power of real time to enable a company to get all sorts of data instantaneously, instead of taking days or even months. It can go through 4.8 billion records in just 0.6 seconds!"

The Adani group was the first HANA customer in India, using the software to enable quick decisions on the move with data on a mobile device rather than having to spend time in an office. The Future group, which is India's largest retailer with some 1,000 stores, real-time sales data helps it understand customer needs so that it can plan its business to satisfy them. HANA can provide such instant information – top-selling products, most effective promotions and most efficient stores. SAP is working with its partners and customers to introduce applications for utility companies to manage power supply in real time, provide retailers with quick sales data analyses and so on.

"It's a once-in-a-generation innovation." And that, the team explains, is what the company is all about. "Innovation has changed things around here!" says Shyamakrishna Kattepur, vice-president, business intelligence services, engineering. "When I joined in 2007, attrition was over 15 per cent, morale was low and there were quality

issues as well as schedule slips in execution. All that is in the past." Adds Bhuvaneshwar Naik, vp, human resources, India: "Communication, listening for influence and building pride among the employees have created a significant paradigm shift. Five teams were formed to decide themselves what was good for them. Attrition is down to 14 per cent, against an industry average of 20-22 per cent."

### Overcoming challenges

SAP has created and implemented an 'Innovation at Play' concept, under which it has what it calls a Co-Innovation Lab (COIL) with partners for whom it helps overcome business challenges. "The spirit of COIL is to foster innovation in a unique way," says Parag Jain, chief technology officer, Arteria Technologies, Bangalore, which has worked with SAP to create mApprove – an application that gets various approval tasks onto the approver's mobile phone. Typically, he points out, these include okays for travel and expense, purchase requisitions or orders and sales orders. Once an organisation implements SAP, these approvals are also automated – but the approvers are often travelling or out of office, so these decisions have to wait till they log into the system. With mApprove, they can view such tasks and take decisions even when on the go.

With such major innovations coming from India, points out Ramakrishna Yerlapati, senior vp, SAP Labs is helping customers keep pace with a wide variety of changes like consumption patterns – especially in countries like China and India – as well as volatility in prices and margins, increasing complexity of assets and energy policy changes. "There are some extremely complex requirements, like joint venture accounting, where we are helping set up the rules of the game in terms of sharing between partners," he says.

"With 5,000 employees of whom 600 are in the field, we are the largest of SAP's 12 labs," says Ferose. "We are also in a unique position with a huge market, with two big global game changers, retail and banking, being very big in this country."

♦ SEKHAR SESHAN