THE STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR INTEL IN INDIA

An Interview with Ms. Kumud M. Srinivasan, Vice President, Technology and Manufacturing Group & President, Intel India

Intel has been at the center of the technical revolution of the 21st Century, outperforming its competitors with an 80% global processor market share in PCs. The firm has been a champion of innovation in a very dynamic industry. Along with revenue growth Intel has been able to establish its brand as a source of trust and quality in the minds of the customer.

However, the proliferation of mobile computing devices has added a new dimension to the industry, taking Intel off-guard. How will the global innovator react? Where will the future markets be? The tejas@IIMB team interacted with Ms. Kumud Srinivasan, who took charge as President of Intel India in January 2013. She is the first woman president ever to be appointed by the company since its inception in 1987 and takes charge from Praveen Vishakantaiah, who had grown the India site to be a leading contributor globally and led development efforts for some of Intel's best-selling products. Kumud talked about the strategic direction for Intel India and the role academia could play in it.

ON THE WAY AHEAD FOR INTEL

Tejas: Intel has captured the PC market but growth there has stabilized. What do you see as the future of Intel in terms of strategic growth? Are there any plans to expand the business to areas like OS design etc.?

Srinivasan: Intel has always had a focused approach. We strive to be the most important player in all the segments we operate in. The number of devices per person has grown quite significantly over the past decade or so. We envision a future wherein we could have a chip in every other device, not just the PCs and smartphones but the day to day devices like fridge, microwaves etc. which are getting more sophisticated and are getting smart capabilities.

We are talking of the Internet of Things–the buzz phrase for opportunities created when more gadgets and machines begin collaborating with little human intervention. We have come up with a line of ultrasmall chips called 'Quark' SoC with emerging wearable, industrial and medical applications that could require billions of tiny calculating engines in coming years. It's the smallest thing we have ever built.

Right now we are focusing on horizontal expansion where we can have our chips in multiple segments of products. The products that we create are OS agnostic. Our focus has always been centered on design and manufacturing of better products. The requirement is to create devices which provide higher level of performance at lower power consumption.

Tejas: What do you think will be the driving factors for growth in India in this industry?

Srinivasan: For a long time IT has been India's calling card and business has excelled in this field. This was fuelled by innovation and entrepreneurship that we have seen in this sector which have now become globally recognized giants. For the country to progress at a similar rate in the technical industry, this spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship should be there at the individual level. The country should look forward to reducing imports and focus on manufacturing hardware devices and components internally, which will boost the market.

Tejas: Your appointment as the Vice President, Technology and Manufacturing Group reinforces the thrust that Intel places in India in the field of manufacturing. What do you hope to achieve as President of Intel India?

Srinivasan: India is one of the most important non-manufacturing sites for Intel globally, with over 3,500 employees. And we are drawing up our annual and three-year vision for Intel India. The broad themes are: We want to see how we can leverage the large engineering presence and muscle we have, to develop the India market. We want to take all of the segments we play in – PCs tablets, smartphones, servers and intelligent systems – to the next level, by developing the overall market and increasing our market share in Intel architecture based devices.

ON STRENGTHENING TIES WITH THE ACADEMIA

Tejas: India has some of the best technical colleges in the world with an eclectic ensemble of faculty and very talented students. Despite our capabilities, we see very little in terms of product innovation, patents and research supported by the industry. What do you feel is the primary reason for being left out?

Srinivasan: This issue has its roots in various reasons. One of the factors is that post graduate studies are not as strong as undergraduate studies and the society primarily values success in terms of grades, jobs, salary packages etc. This leads to students focusing more on their curriculum and less on innovative activities. This leads to very little focus on research and it doesn't create enough pull for the industries to invest in academic research that might have encouraged it and the whole thing turns into a vicious cycle.

Tejas: What are the initiatives that Intel has taken to encourage academia in the area of processor technology?

Srinivasan: Intel encourages academic institutions to be a part of it in three major ways –

a) Providing funds and grants for research.
b) Encouraging the institutions to include relevant courses in their curriculum. Intel recently hosted its first ever India academic forum in Goa to strengthen partnership between Intel and academia, and further empower faculty through sharing of latest technological trends. Last year, Intel India had launched the National Digital Literacy Mission in collaboration with NASSCOM to improve digital literacy in India.
c) Encourage innovation in the academic institutions in the form of various competitions that we sponsor and help organize. Worldwide we have various sciences and technology centers which collaborate with various academic institutions. Intel Global challenge (B-plan), Intel App Innovation Contest (AIC),

perceptual computing challenge and Intel Science talent search (STS) are some competitions organized by Intel across the globe.

Intel India Embedded Challenge (Intel IEC) is another one such Embedded design contest for students, interested individuals & entrepreneurs from all over India. This contest has been put forward to inspire the vast technically savvy community in India to architect, design and develop novel embedded applications based on Intel Atom® processors in areas such as Consumer Electronics, Digital Security Surveillance, Medical, Storage & others.

ON INNOVATION AT INTEL

Tejas: Intel has been the forerunner of innovation right from its inception. What is the biggest challenge in bringing out innovation in an established firm like Intel?

Srinivasan: One of my biggest challenges in India is to see how we can tap into the passion and drive of the engineers. It is extremely challenging to motivate employees to rise above the expectations and make a difference to the market. We need activities (that) celebrate the vision by providing a start-up like platform where they can build ideas into real businesses, thereby creating new wealth and employment for the company and nation and contributing to India's socio-economic development. We are extremely excited to be part of this initiative.

ABOUT THE PERSON:

Kumud Srinivasan is Vice President, Technology and Manufacturing Group and President, Intel India. In this capacity, she is responsible for general management of Intel's operations in India, which includes location's overall strategy, business-enabling operations, organizational development, engineering and innovation for market development, as well as managing relationships with government, industry and academia.

Previously, Kumud was vice president and general manager of IT for Silicon, Software and Services where she led the delivery of IT solutions and services for Intel's hardware and software engineers. Kumud joined Intel in 1987 and has held several business and information systems positions within Intel's manufacturing and IT organizations.

Srinivasan is a member of the Board of Advisors of the School of Information Studies in Syracuse University. She is a member of the Governing Body of the International Institute of Information Technology, Bangalore. She serves on the India Council of the Anita Borg Institute.

Srinivasan received her bachelor's degree in economics from Calcutta University in 1981 and her master's degree in information and library studies from Syracuse University in 1984. In addition, she has completed doctoral coursework in information science at University of California, Berkeley.