

Manwani Unleashes Power of Eight

Unilever Rejigs Itself Into 8 Clusters For Growth & To Build Global Talent Pool

Namrata Singh | TNN

Mumbai: The ₹44-billion consumer products giant Unilever has reorganized itself into eight geographical clusters in a bid to accelerate plans of doubling the turnover.

The heads of these clusters will report to Unilever's newly appointed chief operating officer (COO) Harish Manwani, whose key target is to achieve growth with speed. "The task that has been given to me is to work with the UEX (Unilever Executive) to deliver the agenda that we have set for ourselves, which is to accelerate our growth, double our business and reduce environmental impact," Manwani told **The Times of India** in his first media interview after being appointed COO. He was in Mumbai in connection with a board meeting and annual general meeting of Indian unit Hindustan Unilever.

Nitin Paranjpe, managing director & chief operating officer of HUL, has been made the head of the South Asia cluster. Manwani said that under the new organization structure, heads of countries will be

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Harish Manwani | COO, UNILEVER

"double-hatting" to supervise their specific country as well as the cluster they belong to. The eight market clusters are Europe (including Central and Eastern Europe), North Asia (Greater China and North East Asia), South East Asia and Australasia, South Asia, North Africa, Middle East, Turkey and Russia, Ukraine, Belarus (NAMET & RUB), Africa (Central Africa and South Africa), North America and Latin America. These clusters have been created to enable seamless alignment of every geography with Unilever's accelerated growth globally "People working with these clusters are now managing their job and double-hatting oversights. Nitin (Paranjpe), for instance, runs India

and, at the same time, he has an oversight over the other countries in the cluster, which is South Asia," Manwani said.

The structure would root senior leaders to their bases, he added. "We want to ensure that people in senior jobs stay long enough to create an impact," he said, while adding that the importance of developing markets

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like India and China is growing within the Unilever system, with more people aspiring to work for these markets. "Now Indians can get global jobs. Earlier, Indian managers could go to Singapore. Today they can even go to Brazil. The new structure would enable development of a strong and diverse tal-

ent pool across the globe," Manwani said. "Increasingly, people want to work for India and China, where the future of the world is being created, he added. Manwani played a key role in putting Unilever back on growth mode across Asian and African markets in recent years.

The maker of Skippy peanut butter, Knorr soups and Dove shampoos wants to achieve the same with greater speed. "We made good progress in the way we do innovation. The new organization will give us an opportunity to raise the bar further in the way we execute and in the way we deploy innovation across multiplicity of markets. We are not looking at the world in three regions. We are looking at it globally," said Manwani.

In what is a deviation from the strategy it adopted under former CEO, Patrick Cescau, Unilever is today talking about an "And-And" strategy which is to focus on both the markets and categories which are growing fast as well as those which are not. "Our strategy is that we would like to grow everywhere. What

'And-And' strategy says is that we are not going to trade-off growth in one part of the world by not growing in other parts. Then it's a zero-sum game. What you gain on the swings, you lose on the roundabouts. We recognize that different markets are in different stages of evolution," said Manwani. Countries like India will be hubs within the clusters. "India is already an innovation hub. The idea is to create hubs of strong markets which allows us to literally create a disperse organization which is connected and rooted in the growth centres of tomorrow," said Manwani.

Unilever has set a target of taking the developing and emerging market contribution from over 50% today to 70-75% by 2020. Manwani said the key to achieving growth was market development. He believes there are a lot of "white spaces" which are unexplored in terms of presence of categories. "We are in the process of identifying the gaps so that we can move in quickly," he said. India would be both a receiver and a contributor, he added.