

# professional

Essential reading for the Automotive industry

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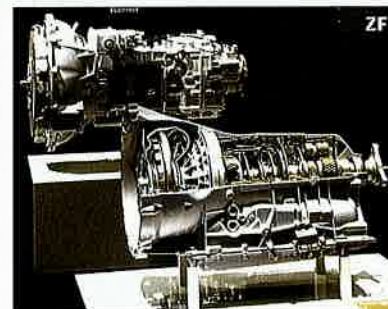
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# India's aftermarket draws global majors



Over 430 exhibitors from 16 countries converge at the trade fair. A special report on how existing and new players plan to tap the emerging Indian aftermarket **Page 14**

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Close-to-production crossover offers design cues to future Tata SUVs, likely to go on sale in early 2016 **Page 3**

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**INTERVIEW**



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haymarket



# MARTHA DESMOND

**Apollo Tyres' London-based Chief Human Resources Officer**, on her priorities for HR at the company, resource planning and women in the workforce. An email interview by **Brian de Souza**.

**What are your key responsibilities as chief HR officer at Apollo Tyres?**

Apollo Tyres has ambitious plans to be the leading tyre company across the globe. These include setting up a new plant in Hungary and expanding capacities in India. Given the plans, it will also entail growth of people across the organisation along with developing people for the tyre industry.

Currently, my key focus areas are people development and succession planning. I think these two key pillars of HR at Apollo Tyres will ensure that we have the right people, with the right skills and in the right place, in order to deliver our business plan.

I have a clear agenda for the contribution of the HR team to move from a tactical role to become a strategic partner and help in delivering the overall organisational objectives.

**In the APAC region, there is a perception that people hiring may lag behind when it comes to handling a dynamic business environment? How do you respond to this?**

Resource planning needs to be an integral part of every business strategy. Without the right number of employees, an organisation's growth potential can be constrained. A combination of internal people development and promotion, alongside a realistic recruitment strategy, is the only way to ensure that you are ready to meet the dynamic business requirements of the future.

**How would you enable your**

**global staff to get exposure to new and different working environments?**

As an organisation, we have always believed in lateral and vertical growth of its employees, and have preferred its existing (internal) talent pool for global requirements.

Nearly 30 specialists, along with their families, were shifted from India to The Netherlands when the company set up its Global R&D Centre for passenger vehicle tyres at the heart of Europe. Similarly, we have picked people from across locations in India for our offices in London, Dubai, Bangkok and Australia.

**How has social media impacted hiring at Apollo?**

Social media certainly has its place within today's recruitment environment, both in terms of maintaining active networks and identifying future candidates through targeted searches. In specialist industries, like tyre manufacturing, social media can be used to attract or find specialists who may otherwise not be on the radar. I have personally recruited a number of talented individuals for engineering, finance and procurement functions by using social media as a search tool.

**In a globalising world, what kind of HR innovations would you like to implement at Apollo?**

Technology can be used as a powerful enabler to streamline existing HR processes and provide managers with the data they need to make good business



**Apollo Tyres has a global workforce of approximately 16,000 employees.**

**'I FEEL THERE IS A NEED TO DEVELOP A MORE STRUCTURED DIVERSITY PROGRAMME TO HELP SUPPORT WOMEN EMPLOYEES TO GROW WITHIN THE ORGANISATION AND TAKE ON LEADERSHIP POSITIONS.'**

and people decisions. As we further develop our core HR processes at Apollo Tyres, I will be continually evaluating whether technology such as the Apollo HR App, a digital platform for hiring, or an integrated virtual talent management system, can be used to leverage our global position.

**In an India context, do you plan to increase the number of women employees?**

We have plans in place to build upon our success of having a strong pool of female talent at our R&D centre, and plan to broaden our recruitment pool as much as possible to allow us to hire more women with the right skills and experience to join Apollo Tyres. While I agree that at the senior level the number of women is much smaller than I would like, I feel there is a need to develop a more structured diversity programme to help support the women employees to grow within the organisation and take on leadership positions.

**What HR initiative that Apollo currently implements would you like to see replicated in**

**any company?**

Apollo Tyres has traditionally committed a large amount of time and money towards the induction of its new employees, both in terms of creating awareness about the company, and also providing training and development to the new recruits to ensure that they are familiar with the company's technical processes. This is a practice which has helped us in hiring and inducting skilled talent, and in my opinion, could be easily replicated across sectors.

**Finally, what is your opinion about working from home? I ask this in the context of Marissa Meyer's comments in this regard some time ago.**

It is my understanding that Meyer's views on working from home were specifically linked to the collaborate culture that she was trying to create at Yahoo rather than being a general statement about work from home.

Like many forms of business practice, working from home is appropriate in some contexts, and not in others. For many organisations, the focus is on 'outputs' rather than the working location, and how one can achieve the best outputs. In Yahoo's case, the view seems to be that of innovative outputs from collaborating rather than working at home alone. I don't feel that this is specifically a gender-related issue but more of finding the right working environment to achieve the optimum performance for the individual and the organisation. ■

