

# CV

**COMMERCIAL VEHICLE**

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# AMW

# gets *TRANZTAR* edge



# AMW gets Tranztar edge

The Bhuj-based CV maker has made application development an opportunity out of a necessity.

Story Sridhar Chari



**I**t has become rather fashionable for OEMs to hawk fully-built vehicles. But, the question is, where are they? It is estimated that in the 24,000 units per annum tipper market, just about half is being catered to by organised application

builders. The picture is no different in the trailer space. A similar-sized market sees an even lower proportion of supply from organised players. The demand-supply gap is only likely to grow, given the spurt in infrastructure creation activity, where tippers

and trailers are predominantly deployed. Not surprisingly, the OEMs are getting their act together. Tata Motors sources trailers from subsidiary Dutch Lanka Trailers (DLT) and tippers from Hyva India. Ashok Leyland also sources applica-

The tipper facility has a current installed capacity of 12,000 units



tions from the latter as well as subsidiary PL Haulwell. Mahindra Navistar Automotives Limited is still in the process of identifying application builder partners. MANFORCE is well into the process of setting up of a wholly-owned arm to manufacture applications. But, despite these moves, the shortage of applications for OEMs and the issue of long lead times for customers to get ready-to-use trucks still remains. This problem would be more acute for a young company that is solely focussed on the HCV segment. So a more comprehensive solution would have to be found.

Since having launched its mid-market (a neat meeting ground between mass-market Indian trucks and European-origin premium trucks) HCVs in 2006, AMW (Asia Motor-Works) has rapidly climbed the sales chart. It is on course to sell close to 10,000 trucks this fiscal, with the numbers expected to be doubled in the next fiscal. A significant percentage of these sales numbers come from tippers and related vehicles for the mining and construction sectors, developed on 25 and 31 tonne GVW platforms. Some of this progress has of course come at the expense of the strong established players. But, sus-



Nitin Chamaria has interesting ideas to transform the face of the application development industry.

taining this momentum would be tough if the availability of tippers and trailers were to be in doubt - especially, when the chassis manufacture occurs in distant Bhuj.

'As of now, OEMs dispatch chassis from plants, thousands of kilometres away from the application builder. The dispatch itself can take 10 days, while, depending upon the availability of applications, the fully-built vehicle can take as many as a couple of months more to roll out. In effect, this means that the customer waits for weeks to have a ready-to-use truck. This puts an additional strain on working capital and also results in a lower quantum of financing. Clearly, we were uncomfortable with such a scenario,' asserts Nitin Chamaria, Business Head, AMW CV Applications. The solution for the company - which has dedicated arms to manufacture CVs, auto components and forgings - was to set up a division dedicated to the manufacture of special applications.

This division, now branded Tranztar Trailers has succeeded in making an opportunity out of a necessity. Currently, there are two distinct manufacturing facilities, one apiece for tippers and trailers.

First onto the tipper plant: It has a built up area of around 15,000 sq m, with an installed capacity to manufacture 12,000 tippers per annum. Banking on a strength →



The fully built AMW2523 tipper coupled with a rock body tipper

of 400 plus workers, it has the ability to process 60,000 tonnes of steel per annum. Of course, there is some help from the machines! The facility boasts of some of the latest manufacturing infrastructure including a first of its kind in India, an automatic robotic welding system to manufacture tippers, an automatic shot blasting plant and advanced air-controlled primer coating and painting systems. In terms of machining, the plant has it all - automatic CNC plasma cutting, CNC press brakes, CNC shearing machines, radial drilling, lathes, SAW welding systems and MIG welding machines complete the array.

With so much of manufacturing muscle, it is not surprising that facility is very strongly vertically integrated. For starters, the steel comes from the steel service centre, located right in the middle of the 600-acre campus. All sub-aggregates of the tipper viz, the sub-frame, floor, side boards, the head board and the tail door are completely fabricated and machined in-house. This is not an approach being followed by other application builders. Fundamentally, they procure sub-assemblies from various vendors and weld them to have a finished product. Now, it is obvious that AMW must have a few reasons to go the whole hog.

‘Doing everything in-house has many benefits. Primarily we get the quality and consistency of our choice. Secondly, there is a huge amount of flexibility. Thirdly and finally, we do not have to wait for days on

end for a particular sub-assembly,’ reasons Chamaria. At Tranztar, the typical manufacturing process consists of sending sub-assemblies for shot blasting and priming, following which they get welded with the other sub-assemblies at the respective

As with any enterprise, getting quality welders was a challenge, but no more, as volumes ramped up.



cubing stations. At this juncture, the now complete tipper body is welded to the chassis, from where it goes to the paint shop. In this manner, AMW can roll out a fully built vehicle in hours, where other OEMs may

take a couple of months, on account of the issues listed above.

The interesting question is, can there be a further improvement on this happy situation? The answer is yes. ‘The whole tipper body can be painted in advance and be mated with the chassis using just 8-10 fasteners within a couple of hours. This is how applications get coupled with chassis in Europe. If things go according to plan, we will roll out this solution within a year,’ spells out Chamaria. Using this method, saves not just lead time for the OEM, but also results in minimal alteration to the chassis during application fitment. Also, the sub-frame gets duly painted, even as the chance of paint spillage is reduced.

### STRONG PRODUCT ARSENAL

Tranztar currently operates at a production level of 700 units per month, with the target to get up to full installed capacity within the next 3-6 months. There is also abundant provision to double the installed capacity, should the market provide sufficient opportunity. The expansive product range

supports these ambitions. The application division puts out 7 tipper models in the 12-20 cubic metre range. The company has designed a new box body design with the ribs being one tall beam and two horizontal



Tranztar has already got up to production volumes of 200 units per month.

ones for extra structural stability. These box bodies are currently being offered in the 14, 16 and 20 cubic metre variants for coupling on 25 tonne and 31 tonne GVW chassis. The rock body tippers complete with sandwich flooring and specially reinforced ST52 steel are available in the 12-18 cubic metre bracket. Recently, Tranztar has also developed a ribless tipper exclusively for coal carriage. Such cargo happens to be of high volume and low density. In the pipeline is a three-way tipper for road construction as also a heated floor tipper for coal transportation. It is an open question as to how much AMW's growing product profile will boost the applications business. The company has recently launched a 31-tonne 8x4 tipper and will soon roll out a low cost 25-tonne product as also a 16-tonner. Happily, Tranztar is also witnessing increasing interest for its products from other OEMs in the market.

#### TRAILERS TO THE FORE

Even in the case of trailers, Tranztar has one of the largest trailer manufacturing facilities with a built up area of 10,000 sqm. The installed capacity is 4,000 trailers p.a. The plant, which employs more than 300 people, has a capacity to process 36,000 tonnes of steel p.a. While the tipper facility is three years old, the trailer plant is a year old. But, relying on much of the same

machinery setup as the tippers, the facility has already put out more than 600 trailers in the market, with 50 percent coming from non-AMW customers. It is currently operating at the level of 200 units per month, with the target of reaching installed capacity within six months. The facility puts out flat bed, skeletal, side board, curtain siders and tip-trailers in the 22-45 cubic metre range, with lengths ranging from 24-80 feet. Soon,

Tranztar will also put out hydraulic trailers, with the hydraulic axles being sourced from both domestic and international suppliers.

Unlike tippers, trailers see a huge extent of customisation. Therefore, the quality of welding is very important. 'We had issues with welding in the first few months. But, as production volumes ramped up, we began to attract trained welders. Now we have also put to use special purpose welding

Building trailers is a hugely customised process that calls for a balance between length and payload



Tranztar makes trailers ranging from 24-80 feet in length



machines to reduce human error,' admits Chamaria. And, much as with any other application, maximising payload is key. Therefore, Tranztar has special sales teams which advise customers in terms of opting for the right solution for their needs. 'Gone are the days, when the customer merely wanted a 'heavy-duty' trailer. Now, they tend to be particular about desired weights to the extent of 50 kg. In many cases, we have ourselves advised customers to opt for a 24-foot trailer to carry steel coils instead of the standard 40-foot trailer. This shaves off 1.5 tonnes of deadweight,' explains Chamaria. In any case, use of the BSK46 grade of steel knocks off up to 400 kg of weight in a standard 40-foot trailer with respect to one made of rolled beam.

### INNOVATIONS

Tranztar has bagged a mandate to supply rigid bodies, for Essar Steel's Hypermart. The order is to supply 100 such black-cabined and red-bodied trucks on the AMW 2518 model. The rigid bodies, which open on three sides, are covered with special vinyl sheets on their external surface to allow for attractive branding. These bodies have a liberal number of leashes in order to allow for the flexibility to carry either steel coils or retail products. Tranztar has also been developing curtain siders and pallet carriers. In a unique development, it has come out with a two-tiered pallet carrier that can carry as many as 5,000 wheel rims put out by AMW's auto component division, vis-a-vis the 2,800 that is possible with a single-tiered trailer. Tranztar has already supplied

The 20 cubic metre ribless tipper, used to transport coal



The trailers are made in capacities ranging from 22-45 cubic metres





Tranztar makes flatbed, skeletal, curtain sider, side board and tipper trailers

a few such pallet carriers to a prominent logistics company.

As part of an intensified foray into the application space, Tranztar is planning to come out with a range of rolled products like tankers, concrete mixers and bulkers by the next fiscal. Parallely, work is underway in terms of developing fire service and rescue vehicles for both civilian and

defence service markets.

#### SERVICE

In order to reach out to non-AMW customers, both OEM and retail, Tranztar has embarked upon a comprehensive branding exercise. It is also in the process of setting up three dedicated dealerships by March. This number shall go up to 12 by the next fiscal. The service infrastructure shall also

be in place, with the first authorised service centre coming up this month. As a thumb rule, Tranztar has installed service personnel, in territories where, there is a population of 25-30 trailers. And then, even while using aggregates from reputed suppliers, Tranztar also offers a 12-month warranty on its fabrication. It also undertakes independent AMC programmes for customers who have directly acquired the applications. A soon to be offered 24-hour toll-free number will further round off the service package.

Not content with merely ramping up the hardware and service setup, AMW has constructed a residential colony for 2,000 people. Besides the residence, the complex also houses a swimming pool, amphitheatre and shopping complex to provide a holistic living experience. The agenda is holistic and so is the ambition. In sum, 'We can make application development a sizeable business within a year,' beams Chamaria. Based on what we have seen, who can fault him for this optimism? ■



Tranztar targets reaching 100 percent utilisation of installed capacity within 6 months.