



# Packaging automation has become lean, smart, data oriented and driven by AI

Setup in 1994 in India with a dream to build a great packaging automation company, Clearpack is currently a 500+ people strong, stable, and well-organized group with network of offices, R&D and production facilities and a dedicated team of packaging professionals across Southeast Asia, India, China, Middle East, Americas and Europe.

## GOVIND BHANDARI

CEO of Clearpack Group

a passionate engineer with incredible energy and insatiable ambition speaks to Pharma Machines & Technology in an exclusive interview.





**Q. What has been the nature of technological developments in packaging automation in the last thirty years of Clearpack?**

**A.** Over the last thirty years, packaging automation has become lean, smart, data oriented and driven by AI. I still remember the solutions that were very complex in the early days when we were building machines and now everybody can easily make them. So, it's great that we've moved up in the value chain and welcomed the technology, which can provide more complex solutions.

**Q. What has been your role and contribution to packaging automation in all these years?**

**A.** Packaging automation is core of our business. We started in this domain 30 years ago when packaging automation was not high on agenda for many companies.

Our role has been to help our customers identify bottlenecks in their packaging lines, suggest optimum automation solutions to overcome the same and prioritise implementation of these solutions.

In terms of contribution, we have always remained mindful of affordability and ROI for our customers, incorporated latest technologies in our solutions and use non-proprietary standard OEM components to ensure that our customers always have access to parts from multiple sources.

Our solutions are designed in Europe (Italy) by our partner companies and we build, assemble and test these machines in our factories in Greater Noida, India and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia under their supervision to ensure same performance level and reliability, while keeping solutions affordable.

Last but not the least, we have built well trained teams of service technicians and engineers in all the markets we operate in to be able to support the solutions we supply and train our users.

**“ To be in the business, we need to continuously innovate by responding to market demand. This has been Clearpack strategy from beginning. This also opens new market and less competition. Clearpack has been leading this upgradation from front. We adapt to market need by implementing latest technological development with continuous engagement with our suppliers. We always keep our door open for new concepts/ designs and at any given time we would be working on an average 20 percent on such projects.**

**Q. Why and how Clearpack is the clear choice for packaging automation?**

**A.** With our vast industry experience, we provide affordable solution for our customers based on line-speed, available workspace, product shape, size and future requirement. Clearpack works as a single source supplier with proven expertise to design, integrate and install complete packaging lines leading to high efficiency, cost and time saving. These world class machines are now made in India and backed by strong network of experienced service engineers. All the critical spares are available at our factory to serve and deliver the spares in fastest timeline to ensure minimum downtime and low maintenance cost.

**“ Today, we supply very high-speed, fully automatic packaging lines from primary filling all the way to end-of-line palletizing to the top consumer companies in the world. Our decision to acquire and start factories in Europe, especially in Switzerland and Italy, was very important because we are seeing the flywheel effect now – even though it took a lot of hard work to get started, it takes much less effort to keep it moving.”**





**Q. The pandemic has changed the world a lot in the last two years, how challenging has it been for Clearpack and how did you take on it?**

**A.** The pandemic has disrupted business on many fronts. Nevertheless, Clearpack resumed its operations following the local authorized guidelines and protocols. Our field-service teams have been working on-site, or remotely, to support the market. We tried to minimize service disruptions to our clients and worked hard to give them packaging automation solutions to assist manufacturers keep their workers socially distanced more safely on the factory floor without hampering overall productions.

**Q. What are the safe, hygienic, and cost effective packaging automation solutions you offer to pharma industry?**

**A.** Our solutions can be broadly categorised into Primary Packaging (like Filling, Capping, Sachet machines) and End-of-Line Packaging (like Shrink bundling, Case packing, Palletizing machines). Our solutions conform to the necessary ISO and EN standards and documentation to meet the safety and hygienic standards, and where necessary regulatory requirements specified by our customers.

**Q. How different is catering to pharmaceutical industry compared to consumer-packaged goods (CPG)?**

**A.** We all know that the primary objective of consumer packaging is to protect the contents from microbiological, chemical, physical, and atmospheric contamination and preserve the contents and thereby protect consumer's health. Packaging is essential and critical for promoting food safety, extended shelf-life and thereby enhancing food security.

The quality of the packaging of pharmaceutical products plays a very important role in the quality of such products. It must protect against all adverse external influences that can alter the properties of the product, e.g., moisture, light, oxygen, and temperature variations, and therefore the packaging components so used need to protect at each stage:

- Protect against biological contamination, protect against physical damage.
- Carry the correct information and identification of the product.
- The kind of packaging and the materials used must be chosen in such a way that the packaging itself does not have an adverse effect on the product (e.g., through chemical reactions, leaching of packaging materials or absorption).
- The product does not have an adverse effect on the packaging, changing its properties or affecting its protective function.

The resulting requirements must be met throughout the whole of the intended shelf-life of the product.

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We've partnered with suppliers who understand our requirements very well and have built very close relationships with them. Clearpack doesn't like to make anything that can be done by other companies more efficiently or better. We concentrate on what we do best and outsource whatever else can be done more competitively by our partners, so that we can provide optimum solutions to our customers.”

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**Q. Is pharma industry lagging behind other high-risk industries in terms of innovation? What are your comments?**

**A.** The pharma industry has been under a constant pressure to provide packaging components which are inert in nature. In other words, that do not have any reactions whatsoever with the medicine over the entire shelf life of the drug substance and beyond. All this can be achieved through the long term and accelerated stability studies that are a part of the drug substance development and release, etc.

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In my opinion, it would be an error to say that the pharma industry is lagging behind. Of course, in some areas like injectable dosage forms where the interacting packaging components that come in direct contact with the drug substance and have immense importance over the other dosage forms. All those need to be selected based on the extensive stability studies of being inert in terms of chemical reactivity of the interacting surfaces.



**We have been supplying packaging machines for close to three decades. Now, in addition, we have smartfactoryworx system to monitor the line performance of existing or new production lines and to improve over-all line equipment effectiveness (OEE) while reducing maintenance costs by predicting and avoiding breakdowns. The solution includes invisible supervision on each machine, recording bottlenecks of production lines, automatic alerts, and more. Real-time data is generated for the improvement of the efficiency of the production lines. This has helped many of our customers to improve their OEE and reduce production downtime."**

**Q. Minimizing rejects is a major challenge in pharmaceutical packaging. How are you addressing this issue?**

**A.** Rejection is a major challenge for any industry including pharma. Rejections could be due to quality issues in packaging materials or with machine related issues. Clearpack is working with our customers to understand the limitation from packaging materials and designing the machine which can work within max input quality deviation. In addition to this, Clearpack is constantly engaged in research and innovations to improve the machine performance adopting to latest technologies. We have also prepared our machine for industry 4.0 and offer a performance monitoring solution to identify the areas leading to maximum rejects.

**Q. Speed gets faster and faster, and technology is constantly changing, it is extremely challenging to be in the business of packaging automation. What has been the Clearpack strategy?**

**A.** To be in the business, we need to continuously innovate by responding to market demand. This has been Clearpack strategy from beginning. This also opens new market and less competition. Clearpack has been leading this upgradation from front. We adapt to market need by implementing latest technological development with continuous engagement with our suppliers. We always keep our door open for new concepts/designs, and at any given time we would be working on an average 20 percent on such projects.

**Q. How important and effective are building partnerships and acquisitions in your kind of business?**

**A.** Today, we supply very high-speed, fully automatic packaging lines from primary filling all the way to end-of-line palletizing to the top consumer companies in the world. Our decision to acquire and start factories in Europe, especially in Switzerland and Italy, was very important because we are seeing the flywheel effect now – even though it took a lot of hard work to get started, it takes much less effort to keep it moving.





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**Q. Brief about your Industry 4.0 readiness, and your SmartFactoryWorx?**

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**Q. What does it mean for your company to be named one of the top 50 SMEs in the E50 Awards this year, especially amidst the challenges of Covid-19?**

**A.** It is a great honor to be awarded as one of the top 50 SME's in Singapore in such a challenging year, especially as we enter our 30th year of being in the industry this year. We view this as a recognition of our agility to be able to change our approach to the market quickly despite challenges faced last year. It is also a recognition of our team members across the region who work tirelessly to ensure customer delight.



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