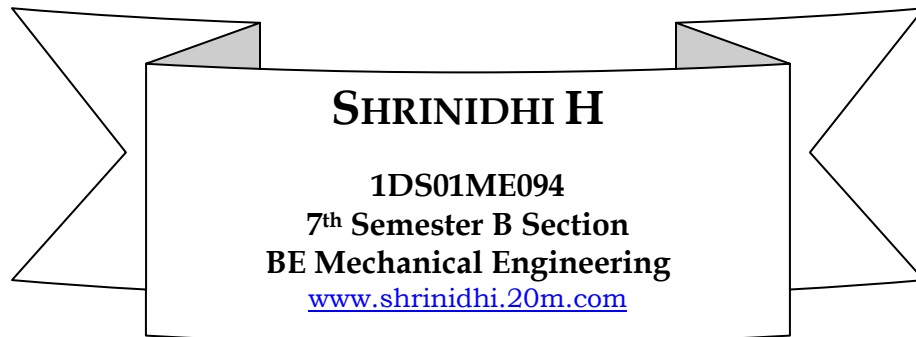


VOLVO India Limited

An Industrial visit Report

Prepared By:



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Escort Faculty

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Power, Passion and Perfection

Entering, surviving and growing in a cost conscious developing market like India with a product priced three times more than those in market is not an easy task. But for Europe's numero uno transport solutions provider, that was a challenge well handled.

Our visit to VOLVO India Ltd, Indian unit of Sweden based automobile company on 10th September, 2004 was a memorable one. And we are thankful to our Vice Principal Dr. Narendra Vishwanathan, our H.O.D and staff members for their efforts in realizing the above visit.

The visit was scheduled in two batches of 50 each on two consecutive days, 9th and 10th September. Ours, being second and final batch for the visit was overcrowded, owing to the highly positive feedback given by the students who visited Volvo the previous day. We were well escorted by Mr. K V Manjunath and Mr. Anil Kumar.

We left the campus at 1150 hours and reached Volvo plant 15kms from Hoskote, on the outskirts of Bangalore city by 1330 hours. One strange observation made by this writer was the Ashok Leyland buses parked outside the Volvo plant, for the daily transportation purposes of its employees. Won't the usage of competitor's vehicle harm Volvo's corporate image? Let Volvo decide.

We gained entry into Volvo premises by 1400hours and we were taken to Drivers' training division, wherein Mr. G.V Rao, Marketing team Head, Truck division welcomed us and gave a corporate presentation on Volvo.

Excerpts:

The ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 certified Volvo aims to be valued as World's leading commercial transport solution provider on road, water and air, with quality, safety and environment friendliness as core values.

Volvo (*Swedish for: I Roll*) was established in Goteborg, Sweden in 1927 and their first vehicle- Volvo LV1 was rolled out in 1928. Now Volvo's products range includes Buses, Trucks, Construction equipments, marine and aviation engines, articulate haulers and generators. Volvo is world's second largest (next only to Daimler Chiseler, better known by their Mercedes Benz) truck makers in market share and Europe's number one. Consider number of engines sold and they're next to none. Volvo has global presence with plants in U.S, Australia, Europe, and Asia. Recently Volvo acquired French based Reno Trucks, while giving up its car making facility to Ford Motors.

Volvo India became operational on 15th June 1998 in 120 acres wide location near Hoskote, with an initial investment of 300 Crores. The truck and bus chassis are imported from Sweden and assembled here, both for Indian market and for exporting. Further, the micro controller that controls the engine is programmed directly from Sweden, online. In India as of now Volvo has 40 support points and four regional warehouses.

Around the Volvo in 80 minutes

Once Mr. G V Rao concluded his presentation, Mr. V Nagraj, Asst. Manager, Bus training in charge, took over. We were taken for a ride in luxurious Volvo B7R (B for Bus, 7 for 7 liters 6 cylinder 260 HP inline turbo powered power plant and R representing rear engine).

Riding and driving the half crore worth luxury coach would be every drivers' and passengers delight. Air suspension, inbuilt air-conditioning, superb noiseless

rear engine and maximum luggage space will give passenger many times their money's worth. A perfect right angle turn at 60kmph was hardly sensible.

Further Volvo needs to be appreciated for showing maximum concern towards safety and comfort of the driver, something its competitors must learn from. Indian drivers never got their due recognition as their job was treated as with a low profile. From drivers point of view, driving a Volvo would be as desirable as driving a luxury car, for Volvo is well equipped with automated diagnosis Engine maintenance System, disc brakes, power steering, adjustable and ergonomic seating and steering, patented aerodynamic body and airbags. The low centre of gravity provides better stability and rear engine gives better push. Unit Injection engine that meets Euro 3 emission norms is quite environment friendly. Except that one needs a higher estimation and judgment ability owing to dimensions of the vehicle, there won't be any difference driving a car and a Volvo.

With every bus sold Volvo trains three drivers and with every truck sold, Volvo trains two drivers free of cost. Training also offered for individuals passionate with driving, with a valid HTV driving license and few years of HTV driving experience as pre requirements.

The high investment on Volvo can be justified because of its highly durable engine requiring zero to minimal maintenance, optimal mileage (3.5kms per litre of diesel, on road, as stated by a customer), reduced travel time and highest customer satisfaction. Because of all these plus points, Volvo is setting a new trend among bus operators who are adding more and more B7Rs to their fleet. Also the increasingly quality conscious passengers are shifting their preference to B7R, despite the higher fare.

Truckers' Day out

Mr. Nagraj took us to the location where trucks were being assembled. L shaped layout was semi automated and local manpower was employed. We were told around 45 trucks are assembled per month. The Volvo trucks are equipped with a much powerful power plant (9 litres and 340 HP, programmable to any lower horse power) than the bus (7 litre and 260HP). We could see many white coloured left hand drive trucks, ready for export to Korea. Dual circuit braking, comprising of two separate braking systems (exhaust brake and retarder), and sophisticated air filter system is something we can find only in Volvo vehicles (at least in India).

The B7R has 6+1 transmission while trucks are equipped with 8+2 gears, including a crawling gear to provide extra torque for a loaded uphill journey. Volvo claims it can incorporate many more advanced feature like GPS, but cost is the barrier.

At the end of the day Mr. Nagraj also addressed many of our queries. The visit concluded at around 1700 hours and our college's Swaraj Mazda brought us back to campus by 1930 hours.

From academic point of view, the visit gave us better understanding of assembly layout, assembly line, automation, advanced automobile technologies etc.

So next time we spot a Volvo bus or truck on road or travel in it, we'll definitely appreciate the technology behind it.

For more on Volvo: www.volvo.co.in
