



# Building for the future

In a two part interview with Commercial Design, PK Mishra, the vice-president and Mahesh Khaitan, director of Salarpuria Sattva Group, reflect on the astute clarity of goals and functions of the company, and shed light on its initiative to translate workplace into a stimulating, creative and collaborative spaces for its inhabitants

**I**n conversation with PK Mishra, vice-president, Salarpuria Sattva Group

## What were the initial steps taken to streamline the facility management practices within the company?

We have come a long way from being a passive supplier to a proactive strategic partner and we believe that in order to support all stakeholders, facility management must step beyond conventional asset deployment and broaden its attention on how to use the workspace more effectively. We need to widen the scope of this segment and build a close collaboration with IT teams not only to align but also to support the overall company strategy. To accomplish this, we have developed strategic relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that measure outcomes such as: ability and speed of knowledge creation, the impact of the office environment on employee productivity, impact on culture etc. In addition, it can also assess customer satisfaction and the ability to adapt to changes in the external environment.

Furthermore, we aim to focus on value creation as well, not just cost savings. In the past, the facility management industry success rate had relied heavily on costs and how to get more for less through cost-cutting. While the agenda will continue to be dominated by cost-cutting, with a primary focus on minimizing occupancy costs, however, being a strategic partner this will also entail finding newer ways to generate value for the occupants of workspace and other stakeholders.

We are one of India's leading Property Development, Management and Consulting organizations known for building trust, innovation and knowledge-leadership. We are known for providing a range of services that include integrated property management to large commercial and residential complexes.



industrial parks and retail outlets. We have always focused on standardizing processes and systems, combined with years of cutting-edge expertise and experience, which has gained us a loyal customer base. Amongst others, we have gradually upgraded ourselves towards everything related to design, construction, commissioning maintenance and replacement of physical plants, equipment and facilities.

In order to maintain our competitive advantage, Facility Management needs to concentrate on producing more fit-for-purpose, tailored service deliveries, that promote new ways of working. The personalized service goes beyond managing assets and systems. Customers want the service provider to understand their business and train the front-line service personnel, to deliver accordingly and this is what we abide by as a company as well.

**Sustainability is a mandated clause for every company today. What were the various measures taken and incorporated into the various commercial projects taken up and managed by the company?**

Construction of a commercial project involves a quantum of investment, both time and money, so it needs to be evaluated before going ahead, with any kind of business decision.

We are shielded from the extremes of nature by the buildings we live and work in, but they also impact our health and climate in countless ways. As the environmental effect of buildings becomes more evident, the term "green building" is gaining momentum. The practice of designing, using healthier and more resource-efficient models of the building, renovation, service, maintenance and demolition is a green or sustainable building. Green buildings are environmentally responsible and resource-efficient throughout a

building's life-cycle.

All our buildings are designed to reduce the overall impact of the built environment on human health and the natural environment by:

- Efficiently using energy, water, and other resources
- Protecting occupant health and improving employee productivity
- Reducing waste, pollution and environmental degradation
- Sustainable materials are used in construction space (e.g., reused, recycled-content, or made from renewable resources)
- Create healthy indoor environments with least pollutants (e.g., reduced product emissions)
- Feature landscaping that reduces water usage (e.g., using native plants that survive without extra watering).

Sustainability has become an important strategic subject in Corporate Real Estate and Facility Management, in particular, considering that buildings account

for almost 40% of global energy use. Today, we are responsible for energy management, health and safety, waste management, recycling, water consumption and carbon footprint management. These responsibilities will increase more in the years to come.

**At Salarpuris Sattva:**

- We are ISO 9001:2000, ISO 14001:2004, OHSAS 18001:2007 certified and we follow the standards in letter and spirit.
- Plan for any emergency and providing an appropriate response to it. It also facilitates the coordination of emergency exercises to refine emergency response procedures, measure response time and the emergency teams' training needs.
- Ensure the facilities are always operationally functional and safe, mapping potential hazards and determining health risks associated with the facility.
- Promote good health at work

and create a safe workplace for employees.

**With the ever-changing technology, what are the systems and software that the company have in place to manage & monitor the performances of the facilities managed by the company?**

The company identifies and employs a range of maintenance strategies to reduce waste, maximize equipment uptime, and optimize occupant satisfaction. Maintenance strategies are also determined based on the available resources, including technology and personnel. Identifying the appropriate maintenance strategies is non-trivial where each strategy is unique with varying characteristics. So advancing to digitalized operations and reminder mechanisms were identified to change management.

Implementation of following digital tools including Reliability Centered Maintenance and Online



P.K. Mishra, vice-president, Salarpuris Sattva Group.

Based Property Management in SAP software is in place to manage and monitor the performances regularly:-

**Computer-Based:**

1. Occupant Help Desk

**Asset Mustering:**

1. Through SAP – PM Module
2. Statutory Obligation & Renewals Tracking system
3. Maintenance scheduling Tracker
4. Soft Service Tracker
5. Breakdown Analysis of Major equipment
6. Equipment-wise daily readings like Diesel consumption of DG sets & it's efficiency reports
7. Plans maintenance orders
8. Cost analysis

**How has the company used IoT to its benefit, especially for the functioning and operations of the projects and properties it manages?**

IoT-connected sensors can help us monitor restricted and unsafe places and procedures, eliminating risks. We depend on this particular technology to analyze past events better and reduce future threats.

**Just as robotics removed repetitive physical activities, the "cognitive outsourcing" of the IoT will allow machines to be responsible for menial or repetitive mental tasks, allowing workers to spend more time seeking organisational insights.**

Here, new perspectives can be found by correlating sensors and environmental data over time. We aim to utilize IoT to improve the safety of our workplaces also. Remote control of IoT-enabled equipment can promote construction progress in areas that are not accessible, contaminated, or hazardous to humans. Innovations in computing wearable, like Google Glass, increase the efficacy of remote employee management, using IoT for tracking construction equipment.

As a team, the IoT will also build new ways for workers to work together. We receive work-related alerts, on our phones to make a fast decision on how to respond best, and press a button to delegate the action to the best party. Just as robotics removed repetitive physical activities, the "cognitive outsourcing" of the IoT will allow machines to be responsible for menial or repetitive mental tasks, allowing workers to spend more time seeking organisational insights, rather than gathering, transforming, transformational tasks. IoT will improve overall productivity.





Your role requires you to work in tandem with stakeholders as well as the service providers and vendors. Could you share with us the lessons that you have learnt in this process and the challenges still prevalent in the industry?

The right team makes all the difference. I ensure that our teams are capable of performing the work efficiently and effectively. That's why building solid relationships with high-quality sub-contractors and other experts is a priority for us. One of the most common struggles is handling the arrangements for procuring necessary and critical services for all equipment. Lead times may, at times, be surprisingly long; therefore, orders should be placed as soon as possible. That means creating a thorough and comprehensive schedule and ensuring that it is followed. Most importantly, make sure that the schedule, including sub-contractors, is well-connected to the team.

Evaluate each portion of the maintenance activities, to ensure that we understand and resolve any perceived discrepancies. Additionally, it is important to avoid 'scope creep' – small or superfluous items that sneak into maintenance activities. There's no better way to communicate than to ensure meetings are scheduled and conducted regularly with vendors. Sometimes, the correct way is not the easiest way, nor is it the most convenient. We are proud to be a values-based organization—it is one of our cornerstones to ethical behaviour. Keeping the lines of communication open, with not only stakeholders but also with all subcontractors and vendors, is critical in creating a reliable, quality-driven outcome.

There are always lessons to be learned from our generations of experience working on large numbers of projects.

- Skilled Labor Shortages in view of increased demand in the workplace.

**The construction industry is characterised by a disintegrated and highly fragmented value chain, which hampers the smooth data flows."**

- Stagnant Productivity Levels, Technology Adoption, Poor Cash Flow.
- Poor Planning & Safety Risks, small profit margins.
- Migration of workforce.
- Safety measures for Covid-19.

**What are the specific strategies that you've adopted to reconcile with the constantly upgrading technological changes?**

Present business models, strategies and skills in any future environment might not be adequate. It is still uncertain what direction the construction sector will follow, and it is very likely that elements of all three scenarios will be used in the next normal. This highlights the fact that players need to plan strategically in the construction value chain. Many proposed actions relate only to a particular scenario, but these actions will be relevant in the future too.

As every potential scenario



Mahesh Khaitan, Director, Sattva Group.

needs talent with different skills than the workforce currently has, recruiting new talent and building up the requisite skills, and appropriate upskilling procedures are largely not in place.

Considering the construction industry is characterized by a disintegrated and highly fragmented value chain, which hampers the smooth data flows and integrated processes that are necessary for any future scenario, integration and collaboration across value chains are imperative.

We look forward to adopting technology on a large scale. Though we have witnessed that the construction market is slowly embracing the modern technological advancements, the sector still relies heavily on manual labour and machinery, which often result in poor productivity.

Furthermore, we plan to maximize the use of data and

digital models throughout processes and review existing product portfolios with embracing new business opportunities. This will in turn enable us to change management and be adaptive.

Develop sustainable solutions- Sustainability has become an important strategic issue in Corporate Real Estate and Facility Management in particular, since buildings account for almost 40 per cent of global energy usage.

Optimize use of space- Space costs money. Knowing that we are moving into a working environment consisting of virtual or mobile workers, it can result in impressive cost savings by investing time in designing innovative workplace designs that can suit these new ways of working while growing room usage rates. Just a few means of optimizing the value of current properties are flexible workstations, distributed workplace strategy and mobile workplace strategy.

In conversation with Mahesh Khaitan, Director, Sattva Group.

**What have been some of your key priorities in order to shape the success of the organisation and its projects?**

We believe that building trust with customers is paramount to the success of any organisation, and we, at Sattva Group, abide by this philosophy. However, earning trust does not come in a day and it takes sincere effort over time. The group believes in complete transparency at all levels and focuses on ethical business practices, to nurture long-term relationship with key stakeholders.

In an increasingly competitive business landscape, with rising complexities due to the pandemic, a vibrant workforce and evolving strategies basis the shift in consumer demands, are key to maintain the growth trajectory in the post-pandemic era. Industry research has shown that a very significant percentage of market capitalization amongst companies is based on intangible assets - skilled employees, exceptional leaders, knowledge and stakeholder relations. We believe that prioritizing these elements has always helped us to shape the success of our organisation. Further our emphasis on individual involvement of all the key aspects of a project, has ensured a seamless outcome, amongst our key stakeholders.

**How is the company integrating various sustainable measures within its operations and projects?**

And what are some of the key innovations in the industry being adopted by the company?

We take pride in being one of the founding members of the Indian Green Building Council, which is our driving force for to develop sustainable projects. We have made it mandatory that all commercial project designs should be as per IGBC platinum ratings and in the last three years, we



have received this certification consistently.

Sustainability is a key factor while planning and designing any project. We believe in using only natural resources, and also ensure that we maintain a green curve in all our commercial ventures. We emphasize on utilizing solar energy and rainwater harvesting, as the two primary initiatives. We aim to ensure that all assets contribute to our resilience efforts across commercial projects, for minimizing the impact of extreme weather events and to speed up recovery. In addition, we also believe that our corporate leadership should continue sustainability efforts, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by focusing on local and green resources. Implementing water/waste management, and reducing pollutants in the air, water and land (surface and underground) are also important as part of a quality commitment to meet with sustainable development goals.

Nevertheless, we believe in the "3R" approach of Reduce, Reuse and Recycle and hence, any residual materials are always repurposed for other uses. In this process of achieving higher yields on sustainability, we are

proposing new, more stringent requirements in alignment with the industry's increasing efforts on energy efficiency, water efficiency and indoor environments. Amongst other innovations, sustainable elements from social aspects are also being incorporated to spur the development of community-building and supply chain initiatives, to drive ethical procurement, and credits for biodiversity and ecosystems.

**Over the decades we've witnessed diverse transformations in the workspace vertical – the way they've been designed and managed. What do you think is the future of office spaces from this point onwards?**

Change is the only constant in this rapidly evolving scenario. The real estate industry has been quite dynamic in the past two decades, where the demand for commercial spaces has taken momentum. Considering the disruptions posed by the pandemic, almost all consumer engagement aspects have been digitized. Technology has now taken centre stage with IoT being introduced in Building management, which we believe will result in the judicious use of resources and smart building management systems, for

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customized requirements.

On the design front, re-evaluating floor plans, to de-densify the office space will be a good practice, however, this might permanently alter building forms. For instance, with more people working from home, workplaces could be transformed into a space for meeting rooms of varied sizes and well-spaced communal workstations. With the integration of natural elements and processes, the built-in ambience will probably be another key feature, of post-pandemic offices.

In addition, more outdoor space can be expected to be incorporated on each floor; by providing terraces and roof decks to enhance productivity. As we are at the forefront of the fight against the pandemic, it is important to keep in mind, effective solutions for infection control, and facilities designed to minimize the infection. This is also to design a space which will fulfil the social distancing norms without any conflicts. There will be renewed layouts with elements like higher screens, glass barriers etc. Use of anti-microbial elements that can be easily cleaned and sanitized will be increased. Common surface touchpoints will mostly be tackled with automated arrangements. To add another point, sustainability has been a part of building design for a while now. The next logical step would be to make office buildings carbon neutral, which would require some further engineering as we are a cost conservative nation and this could be one of the other trends, henceforth.

**Having been a part of the industry for over two and a half decades now, what are some of the biggest mistakes that you think are still prevalent and practiced during the design and operations phase of commercial spaces today?**

The field of design is part of a unique artistry in itself, that has no set rules. There are only



a few proven guidelines which are primarily taken into account, while designing a particular building structure. In this case, thinking out of the box with design compatibility is the key. Also, architects have to suggest using local and green products during the initial design phase which is still missing.

Therefore, the beauty of a design is that even though there is a mistake, it can then be altered to refurbish into something else altogether and no one would be wiser; but of course, certain planning and re-strategizing should be in place. Therefore, it is more important to be adaptable while designing than to be a perfectionist.

**Given the current volatility in the real estate market, what is your view on the growth and expansion of the commercial buildings real estate?**

Certainly, the market is extremely volatile at this moment, due to the on-going crisis and this will persist for a while. The sudden shift to remote working has somewhat added

to this volatility, as most of the companies are trying to cut cost on real estate. According to Savills report, the post-COVID-19 scenario will be contributory in providing a fresh boost to the realty sector, with better intensity and vigour, than it was in the pre-pandemic era. Keeping itself afloat in the waves of absorptions, relocations, and expansions in the past 1.5 years; the commercial sector has been on the investor's radar. Going forward, we can expect commercial real estate to continue being an attractive avenue for investors.

We have also seen a surge in demand in the past few months from large scale companies and are expecting a good amount of closures happening in the Q2 of 2021. Majority of the bigger tenants are evaluating their consolidation and are in discussions for a few Built-to-Suit options, which will eventually help the commercial market to sustain, considering the upward demand curve for such projects, planned to be delivered by 2022. Furthermore, rental pricing has also not been

impacted much, keeping in view the lessened A grade supplies with specific demands in that domain.

**Also, given that the metro have almost reached their saturation points, do you think are the Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities in India are catching up to take up the load? Do you see the shift happening?**

Though there is a notion that the metros have been saturated, we still feel there is a lot of potential yet to be explored. If we consider Bangalore as a market, the North and West part of the city have a lot of potential to be built and are still not entirely saturated, as compared to Central Business District & Outer Ring Road.

Therefore, we feel that Tier-II and Tier-III cities will eventually develop, but there is still time to execute it. Clients' across industries are still hesitant to move to those cities, either due to lack of infrastructural facilities or scarcity of required talent pool. In fact, we are pushing some of our top clients' to move towards Tier-III cities, and we help them in this process with real estate.

However, one can also expect support from the potential Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities' Governments and this is a vital factor for executing the approach. This will surely provide some incentives to pursue developments in those locations and in turn, will boost the demand, thereby decongesting the metros.

**What are some of Sattva's upcoming projects?**

As a company we have been quite resilient even in times of the pandemic and some of our upcoming projects are:

- Knowledge Park, Hyderabad
- Image Tower, Hyderabad
- Knowledge Centre Kokapet, Hyderabad
- Knowledge Point, Bangalore
- Sattva Global City, Bangalore
- Sattva spectrum, Sarjapur road, Bangalore
- Sattva Horizon, Airport road, Bangalore