



Like the genesis of many fine products, Kitply's idea, too, was the result of idle doodling. Already a recognised entrepreneur manufacturing wooden chests, S P Goenka noticed how a corner of the table was beginning to peel off. This set him thinking and resulted in Kitply – the happy abbreviation of Kitchen Plywood. Kitply has zealously worked towards preserving the forest cover and has transformed thousands of acres of barren land into lush green forests.

Market

Plywood has been made for thousands of years. Its earliest known occurrence was in ancient Egypt around 3500 BC when wooden articles were made from sawn veneers glued together crosswise. Comparatively, the history of the plywood industry in India is recent. About 75 years ago, it started on a modest scale when imports totalled ₹32 lacs (US\$ 58,180 at current prices). Today, the market for plywood and allied products in India is estimated to be about ₹12,000 crore (US\$ 2.20 billion) with 70% dominated by a multitude of motley players in the unorganised sector. Given the public shift towards buying brands in preference to commodities the organised sector has been growing at between 25% and 30% annually as against a nominal 10% for the unbranded segment (Source: industry data).

On the flip side is bad news. While India's booming economy had ushered in a frenzy of building activity, the pressure on dwindling forest resources had resulted in a steep mismatch between demand and supply. Several international players were quick to spot this opportunity and stepped in to bridge the gap. Many of them had long-term ambitions of becoming key suppliers. Even as they set up house, came the recessionary hiccup in early 2008. Despite activity in the real estate sector slowing down, the gap was so immense – the International Timber Organisation had estimated way back in 2001 that while India produced commercial timber equivalent to 16.50 million cubic metres, demand was estimated at 73 million cubic metres – that India continued to shine brightly on the export radar of leading wood-producing countries.

However, wood is now a grave concern worldwide. Today, it is incumbent on wood product manufacturers to carry out their own captive forestry.

Kitply has led the way by embarking on its own tree plantation schemes in Assam, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh. It has selected Kadam as a suitable, fast-growing timber species for plantation on farmers' land on ten-year and twelve-year cycles. The company has also set up six plywood factories – three in Assam and one each in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Achievements

Most leadership positions are attained by creating a unique selling proposition (USP). For Kitply it was boiling waterproof. The company pioneered this concept and quickly arrogated for itself the role of a quality conscious entity. Over the years the brand's promise of delivering premium quality wood that is durable, has stood the test of time and has enabled it to retain top-of-mind awareness among customers.

In what is widely hailed as a major

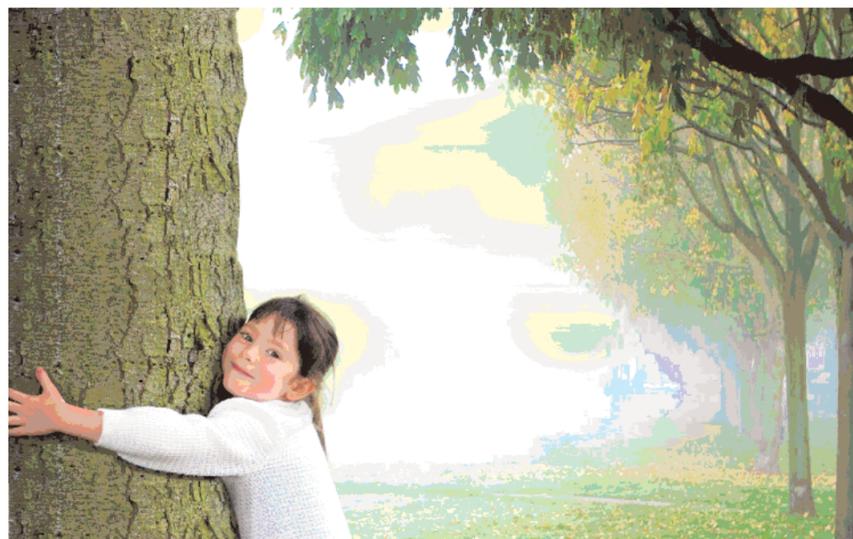
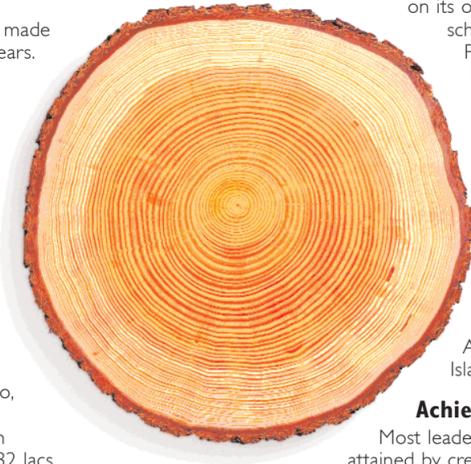
breakthrough in today's environmentally-conscious world, Kitply has shattered the traditional stereotype of the wood-product company as a plunderer of forests and a wrecker of environmental havoc. The company's commitment to its customers has only been matched by its passion for environment protection. It is intensely committed to conservation and the enhancement of this very fragile bio-resource base.

Kitply has zealously worked towards preserving forest cover and has transformed thousands of acres of barren land into lush green forests in the states of Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh and other parts of the country. A satisfying spin-off of this initiative has been the rapid social and economic development of backward regions that fall in the immediate vicinity of these areas.

In the commercial arena Kitply has been awarded for its export performance for three consecutive years in the 1990s by the Government of India. It has also won the *Indira Priyadarshini Vriksha Mitra* award for its agro-forestry projects.

History

Kitply was established in 1982. Its founder, S P Goenka was already a well-known entrepreneur supplying wooden boxes, chests and other packaging items to leading tea



companies in Assam. Like many good enterprises Kitply, too, started as an idea rooted in common sense, everyday observation. One day, seated at his dining table, he found portions of the top layer of the table beginning to peel off at the edges. That was when the idea of making plywood first entered his mind. He began to focus on wood products for use in kitchens, where constant exposure to water had a harsh effect on them.

Thrown this new challenge, the entrepreneur in him resurfaced. He worked on perfecting the technology before launching the product with a ground-breaking marketing campaign. The brand name, Kitply, emerged from the words 'kitchen plywood'.

Kitply was listed as a public limited company in 1985. In the more than 25 years since, Kitply has grown organically. It has set up several manufacturing facilities and acquired other wood-product companies. Amongst those now sporting the Kitply logo are Himalayan Plywood, Assam Railway Timber Company, Asian Timber and Polymer Company and New Board Manufacturing Company.

Product

In the last few years Kitply has introduced several innovative products including checkered, high-density boards, skid boards and fire-retardant plywood. A special, bullet-proof plywood introduced by Kitply has found extensive use in high security zones.

To render its products boiling waterproof, Kitply uses only selected hardwood species and specially formulated hot-set adhesives. Termite resistant properties are induced in a vacuum treatment plant by treating plywood under high pressure and temperature with copper-chromium boric compounds.

The relentless pursuit of value-adds has resulted in the introduction of a wide range of ceiling tiles made of engineered chips and



available under the brand name Kit Topline.

Pre-laminated particle boards for use in cabinets and commercial displays have also been developed and are available under the name Kit Lam.

Of its many products, Kitply Fireguard is, perhaps, its most popular. It was the first plywood that was fire-resistant and incorporated retarding bio-degradable properties. In its pre-fab range are termite-resistant, moisture-proof flush doors under the Swastik brand, while Kitply's Swastik Concrete Shuttering Plywood finds extensive use in the construction of dams, flyovers, bridges, tunnels and high altitude military barracks.

However, the top-of-line offering is Kitply Gold whose finish, handling characteristics and long-life have established it as the future of plywood in

India. The decorative laminate, Kitvista, comes in a variety of finishes, textures and designs while Kitply Curvy, made from selected hardwoods, is ideally suited for curvilinear applications. Of significance to the furniture industry is Kitply's Royale plywood and block board.

Recent Developments

In a market prone to duplicate products, brands need to constantly stay ahead of the game. A key initiative to defeat these nefarious designs launched by the company is called Kit Stripes; it's a consumers' guarantee that he is buying the original product. These stripes are an integrated part of the plywood – flitched onto the product in the company's own units – and then joined to each other with patented technology. This renders the entire process of duplication difficult and unviable for a wannabe manufacturer. Unfortunately, competition continues to use the less expensive paper stickers, thus falling easy prey to fraudsters.

Concerned with the rapid denudation of forests, Kitply has cast its attention to developing alternate solutions. One answer that has emerged is bamboo-based ply products. Already popular in China, bamboo is available in abundance and is under no immediate threat of over exploitation. To take this initiative forward Kitply has installed various bamboo processing machines in one of its factories in Assam. It is currently manufacturing bamboo-based ply for the CPWD in the Andaman Islands.

Promotion

Before Kitply entered the market, plywood was marketed and sold almost entirely as a commodity. Kitply changed the dull marketing practices and established new rules through its breakthrough advertising. It became the first company in its segment to develop brand communications and put in place marketing and promotions strategies.

Its first significant effort was focussed on promoting its USP – boiling waterproof – in its communications. As the company waded deeper into the market it recognised the changing dynamics that were shaping it. To capitalise on this knowledge, Kitply introduced a new logo,

symbolising its constant endeavour to innovate. At the same time it unveiled a new pay-off line, *Ply Mane Kitply*. This had the desired effect of arrogating for Kitply the generic platform. It's a position Kitply has never vacated.

As market barriers continued to break, further innovation followed. Kitply embarked on a mission designed to elevate the purchase motivation. The slogan – homes are a reflection of your own personal style – captured this dynamic shift. All new brochures, product stickers and sample covers were adapted to this communications strategy. The Kitply website was revamped to reflect an environment-friendly corporate image. It included specific sections for consumers, architects and carpenters.

Between then and now, the company has successfully used cricket – once held by conventional wisdom to be inappropriate for wood product manufacturers – in its outreach strategy. Kitply Super Sixes in successive international tournaments still echo in the minds of viewers. The association with icons like Sachin Tendulkar, who received Kitply cheques at the end of cricket matches, created a remarkable franchise for the brand.

Kitply further strengthened the cricket card by sponsoring a tri-nation ODI series, Kitply Cup between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh to enhance its global visibility. The India-Pakistan final, which was telecast by Neo Sports, received 42.6 million tune-ins, estimated to be some 20% higher than the Indian Premier League (IPL) final. Peak ratings for the series among the core male audience were as high as 16 television rating points (TRPs).

Brand Values

Kitply Industries Limited aims to leverage its expertise to become the top plywood company in the world through innovation and sustained research and development.

The company intends to be completely self-reliant in timber procurement through agro-forestry and continue to develop alternates for ply manufacture.



Things you didn't know about Kitply

- In India, waterproof plywood is generically known in the market as Kitply
- The average annual sales of Kitply, placed end-to-end, would encircle the world in a foot wide strip
- The cumulative sale of Kitply, till date, could enable the construction of a wooden bridge, four feet wide, between the earth and the moon – and some way back, as well
- Kitply's bamboo-based products have been used extensively to construct houses in tsunami-affected areas of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands
- Some of the more prominent places where Kitply has been used are Palace on Wheels, Indian Naval Shipyards and the American Consulate