

**Takuichi Shimizu: Omron is Challenging Spirit of independence by working for welfare of People with disabilities**

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**IndiaCSR News Network**

PUNE: Takuichi Shimizu-President at OMRON, Management Centre at India. He shared his company’s vision on business philosophy and Corporate social responsibility. **Rusen Kumar, Editor IndiaCSR** talked with **Takuichi Shimizu**, here is the edited excerpts of the interview:

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**Kindly tell us about OMRON’s Global operations.**

OMRON Corporation is a global leader in the field of automation based on its core technology of sensing and control. its business fields cover a broad spectrum, ranging from industrial automation and electronic components to automotive electronic components, social infrastructure systems, healthcare, and environmental solutions. Established in 1933, OMRON has about 39,000 employees worldwide, working to provide products and services in more than 110 countries and regions.

In the field of industrial automation, we support manufacturing innovation by providing advanced automation technologies and products, as well as through extensive customer support, in order to help create a better society.

**When did the company start its India operations?**

We commenced its operations in India in 1993. Today, through its rich and unique portfolio based on sensing and control technologies, we endeavours to contribute towards making India progressive by bringing innovation and value to innumerable fields such as manufacturing, industrial, energy, home appliances, automotive and healthcare.

**What are the values and mission of OMRON India?**

Mission and values form the core of our Principles which represent our unchanging, unshakable beliefs. These are the cornerstone of our decisions and actions and are the driving force behind our growth.

**Mission:**

To improve lives and contribute to a better society

**Values:**

Innovation Driven by Social Needs – Be a pioneer in creating inspired solutions for the future

Challenging Ourselves – Pursue new challenges with passion and courage

Respect for All: Act with integrity and encourage everyone’s potential

By practicing this philosophy, we have been contributing to sustainable development of the society and improved lifestyle of millions of people across many fields globally.

The basic premise is to identify & understand the latent needs and realise the best matching of machines to people to provide product and services. Just to give some examples the regarding this, I would like to share that Omron was the first in the world to make automated traffic signals, ticket gate system (or unmanned train station system), on-line automated cash dispensers, electronic BP monitors for home usage, etc.

**What are the key areas of business in India?**

*We have four businesses in India.*

**Industrial Automation**: To explain in simple words – ‘It helps the manufacturers develop better machines’ –so as to deliver many benefits such as better quality, productivity, efficiency, accuracy, safety, energy saving, and many more which are  beyond human capabilities.

Our solutions such as vision sensors, safety sensors, machine automation controllers, drivers, software and robotics solutions are being utilized across many sectors such as Automotive, Food n Beverage, FMCG, Pharmaceuticals, Packaging, etc.

**Electronic & Mechanical Components:** Providing high-quality electronic components adding value to products across different industries like telecom, industrial, energy, home appliances, medical and automotive. Some of the very apt examples of this portfolio are relays, advanced sensors, and switches being used in air conditioners, washing machines, etc.

**Automotive Electronic Components:** This comprises of advanced electronic components and systems used in automotive sector such as transmitters & receivers enabling key less entry, body control module to control door lock, etc.

**Healthcare Monitoring:** Providing equipment for health monitoring at home such as digital BP monitors, glucometers, nebulisers, body fat analysers, etc. We hold the highest market share in the digital BP monitor market in India as well as across the globe.

**Please throw some light on OMRON India’s CSR journey?**

Our CSR journey in India is signified by*Your Voice Their World* – our flagship project in the country. The project endeavors to create audio-based library of books and poems for the visually impaired. While searching and planning for a CSR initiative in India, we really wanted to do something which contributes to a relevant societal issue; which  is more than just a financial contribution; has a  long term perspective and is in sync with our global policy.

As a part of its CSR initiatives, globally, we have been making efforts to help people with disabilities and challenging spirit to achieve independence by providing means to complement their disabled parts so that they become able and get opportunities to demonstrate their unique abilities.

Your Voice Their World is in line / sync with the same premise.

When we came to know that India has the largest population of blind and only 10 % of them have access to education, we understood that this is one area where our support can really create a difference gradually over a long term. Education is one of the tools which can really help the visually impaired people to become more capable, financially independent, better human beings and a part of the mainstream.

Also, being a technology leader, we understand the importance of technology in bringing changes to the society. The concept of audio books is futuristic and shall surely gain more penetration in the coming years.

**Do you have a CSR policy?**

Yes, we have a global CSR policy. It comprises of three parts :

*Contribute to a better society through business operations:*Continuously offer advanced technologies, high-quality products and services based on innovation driven by social needs. All of our businesses aim to benefit the people by providing solutions to many social needs.

The concept is still very much alive in our company. We have  current global long term growth policy clearly states that our businesses are directly connected to solutions to various social issues. It is all about practicing our philosophy—creating a better society through our business. Even in India also, we endeavor to venture into newer domains which help us to further strengthen our contribution to social issues. Electricity and health sectors are some of the examples in this regard.

*Show a commitment to addressing societal issues as a concerned party:* Such activities form an integral part of our existence and help us to render our responsibilities as a good corporate citizen. Termed as social contribution it is basically done in the form of voluntarism, donation, individual CSR projects contributing towards a relevant social issue, etc.

Our support to disabled people worldwide and our India project Your Voice Their World also come under this category. Just wish to add here that we are the first in Japan to set and operate factories run by disabled people.

*Always demonstrate fairness and integrity in the promotion of corporate activities*. Promote more transparent corporate activities that maintain fairness and integrity not only through strict compliance with laws, regulations and social rules but also through increased accountability.

**How has OMRON’s audio-based content played an effective role in educating the blind?**

The project has been doing its bit in not only producing the content but also in making it available to thousands of blind people in a country which has the largest blind population in the world. The project has recently concluded its 2nd phase and we are glad to report that so far it has created 5202 hours of audio books and 3172 e-books. Along with the books; we have also made available e-book readers to 85 students which is a handy contraption to listen & navigate through the audio-books.

**Noteworthy aspects :**

Production of accessible format books: Digital Taking Books and e-books at NAB premises, Delhi.
Apart from the normal text books (for school children from 9th to 12 class in arts and commerce streams in both Hindi and English), one of the tangible objectives is to make a contribution in the availability of science books and competitive exam preparation books for blind students (after they pass out of 12th class).

Strengthening Distribution system and infrastructure: So that the content reaches out to more and more beneficiaries. NAB is the NGO which has the largest network in the country amongst all the organizations working for the blind people. Hence its contribution via this project is very meaningful in terms of the number of beneficiaries it is reaching out to (approx 10,000- directly and indirectly).

Reading equipment required to read books in accessible formats: The project also undertakes provision of E-book readers at a subsidized cost to the blind students.

**What is your view on role of audio-based education for visually impaired community?**

First of all I would like to share my views on Education. I strongly believe that it is one of the prime means to provide solution to many social issues and plays a very important role in the overall sound development of society. For the disabled people, it gains more importance as it acts as a strong way to realize independence.

This holds immensely true for visually impaired people.  Technologically enhanced tools such as audio-based content can be really helpful for them not only to get education but also to move up in the ladder of life and gain a better place in the mainstream.

However, the general conditions to support this are not good and are not enough.

Of the 37 million people across the globe who are blind, over 15 million are from India. But ironically only 1% of the printed material is available to the visually impaired in an accessible format.

Even worldwide also, the data are not encouraging.  Audio-based content has immense potential and plays an effective role in bridging this book famine for the visually impaired. Hence, I feel more and more corporate should come forward and contribute to this cause.

**Tell us more about the online version of the project ‘YourChoice their World’**

The portal’s prime objective is to connect as many people as possible with the cause and the need because we believed it will certainly help in improving the situation by gathering more support for the visually impaired people. Today, online medium is one of the most effective ways to reach out to masses. Also, another reason was to create a library of poems for visually impaired for their leisure reading (which is again one of the most ignored areas while creating audio based content).

Hence , we extended the core project to online world by creating a portal [yourvoicetheirworld](http://www.indiacsr.in/enwww.yourvoicetheirworld.com) [2]. It motivates people to donate their voice towards creating the world’s largest audio library of poems for the visually impaired. The website presents an interface where a user can record a poem. The collection is then donated to NAB, Delhi. In a span of 2 years, it has registered 2711 recordings.

Being promoted and driven on our social media sites(Facebook, Twitter,YouTube),it has also turned out to be a unique social media driven campaign.

The campaign has grabbed attention of the tinsel world too which is evident from the recordings contributed by many renowned actors including the likes of Anupam Kher, Dia Mirza, Rahul Bose, Atif Aslam, Sajid Khan,Vir Das & Rohan Joshi to name a few. The campaign has also been gathering accolades globally. It has won Bronze at the renowned CLIO Healthcare-2015 award in the unique media category and a Silver at EFIE-2015 in the corporate campaign category.

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