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A DAY IN THE LIFE OF... A GLOBAL CREDIT MANAGER

Heading a global credit department may be a daunting role for some, but with his depth of experience and enthusiasm for the industry, Ashok Kampani takes it all in his stride
By Freddie Dawkins

CCR World has met with Ashok Kampani in both Budapest and London this year, when he has been one of the most vocal, enthusiastic and determined participants at conferences for international credit professionals.

Mr Kampani is no shrinking violet, and his depth of experience shone through in his questioning of speakers and fellow delegates. But he always asked the difficult questions with a quiet sense of humour.

"After completing my arts degree at the Punjab University in India, I came to London and completed a national diploma in business studies. That then gave me the opportunity to move to Switzerland and work for Ingersoll Rand in Fribourg as a customer service representative."

He explains how a major promotion came in 2003, when Ingersoll Rand decided to migrate its trading company function from Switzerland to Ireland. "I was asked to lead the transfer of the trading company's activity for the division," he said.

"At that time the Infrastructure division represented \$1.1bn sales. In this role I had the responsibility to oversee transfer of various other functions – pricing, inventory and supply chain management and warranties – in addition to my primary function of credit and risk management."

Atlas Copco, a Swedish company with a global turnover of \$5bn, then acquired Ingersoll Rand Drilling Division. Mr Kampani says: "The acquired division represented a huge combined turnover. I took the lead in establishing the credit department and writing the credit policy for the division."

"During this time I was working in Canada and the USA. In conjunction

with setting up the credit department and writing the credit policy, I also had direct responsibility to manage the entire international credit portfolio, with an average receivable of \$200m spread across the world. It was an exciting time!"

He joined ABB Switzerland in Baden in 2007, after taking a year out to do charity work in India. "I am now in the process of writing a new credit policy and restructuring the credit department. My job also involves direct responsibility of receivable management from all credit aspects for a division with \$2bn turnover and an average outstanding receivable of \$300m. I found the job through networking – it is so often the case of whom you know, as well as what you know."

"It's still early days for me at ABB and I am in the process of putting policy and procedures in place; once this task

I do feel that credit management is not only a tool for risk management but it is a great tool to achieve better asset management

is completed we will assess the work volume and staff accordingly and then I will have my role completely defined."

Mr Kampani says that within ABB's operations, the credit function reports to treasury as a part of global risk management. His department covers the entire world, and the range of customers varies from public sector to blue-chip and medium-sized companies.

"At the moment, because everything is so new, I do not have much of an opportunity to get out and meet customers," he says. "But once we have the department fully up and running, then I will be making it a priority to get out and meet customers on a regular



Ashok Kampani, credit manager, group function finance, ABB Switzerland

basis. There is probably no better way of really knowing customers – and spotting potential problems before they escalate."

He explains that all ABB customers are subject to simple, internally-designed country and commercial filters, which lead to further investigation or evaluation as and when required. On

credit insurance, the company mainly uses the Swiss Export Risk Guarantee scheme and some limited use of other private sector cover.

"I do feel that credit management is not only a tool for risk management but it is a great tool to achieve better asset (receivable) management," he says. "In view of the ongoing credit crisis this tool has become very relevant. I see the main challenge for a credit management team is to show and convince sales management of added value."

"To this end, we sometimes send staff on external training, but much of our training is based in-house and on-the-job." **CCRW**

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