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An interview with Junai Maharaj, President & CEO of Buckman



1) Buckman, who will be celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2020, recently went through a rebrand. What can you tell us about the reasoning behind this change?

Our new brand reflects that Buckman is evolving in a big way. The tagline, Chemistry, connected, perfectly expresses what we're doing because we are still the company that's rooted in the deep personal connections we have with our customers and the expertise we bring them, but today that connectivity also includes the digital connections that are critical for any business to succeed in the future.

So, as we head into our 75th year, I can say what hasn't changed is Buckman's steadfast commitment to helping our customers succeed regardless of the challenges facing them, the industry they operate in or their location in the world. Today we connect our customers with highly-trained industry experts, quality chemicals, the latest smart technology and advanced data analysis. More than ever before, we're partnering with our customers to improve their productivity, increase profitability, and ensure safety, compliance and sustainability.

We have been making significant investments in digital technology to enhance the value that we bring our customers, because simply put we're here to help them win. To do that in the modern marketplace it takes more than chemistry and expertise, it also takes data monitoring and analysis. Digital solutions enable our customers to improve their manufacturing process in ways we never imagined just a few years ago. Our associates are as excited about it as our customers are – it's fueling a whole new era of innovation and possibility thinking in the company that's really exciting.

2) You just passed the one-year mark in your new position. As you reflect on the past 13 months, what are some of your observations as the first non-family CEO of Buckman? What have been some of your biggest challenges? Successes?

This first year on the job has been fast, and it's hard to believe we are well into the second year at this point! I am extremely blessed to have the opportunity to serve as Buckman's first non-family CEO. Having been here for 16 years, I can tell you that the Buckman family has always been very invested in the development of its employees to ensure that the company continues to grow and thrive, and my new role is a testament to that.

When I embarked on this new role, I knew we needed a strategy to not only take Buckman, but also our customers, into the era of Industry 4.0 where virtually everything is or will be connected. This new thinking has already accelerated our best practice sharing and the speed with which we bring innovation to market. The fact that our sales are breaking new records tells me that our team, our culture and our strategy are working. The pace and ways markets and technology are changing represents new opportunities disguised as challenges and it is therefore imperative that we work continuously to become more agile; to think beyond being just a chemical supplier and focus more on delivering outcomes to our customers. We must be able to innovate much more rapidly than we have in the past, and that means trying things like open innovation and building an ecosystem of new partnerships.

The speed at which the market has adopted some of our new smart technology has amazed us. For example, we've seen an incredibly rapid adoption of our new ECHOWISE™ entrained air monitoring technology. Helping customers understand the different value that comes with smart technology like ECHOWISE pushed us to have new conversations with them, which can be a challenge when you've been a well-known and successful chemical solutions provider for almost 75 years. The benefits of these conversations have been fantastic. We've learned so much, and as a result, we are confident in our new direction. We know the market still has significant unmet needs...so we need to move even faster!

One success I'm really proud of is how we're using smart technology to continue our history of knowledge sharing with our customers. Knowledge sharing is a passion of past-CEO Bob Buckman, and Steve Buckman started working on smart technologies before he retired, and I share those passions and hope to continue to further them. With the insights that smart tech brings, we are giving customers more control over their daily operations, allowing them to use real time data to not only

leverage our innovative chemistries and industry experts, but to also optimize their processes.

Buckman recently received the prestigious supplier award from Sasol in South Africa which measured nearly every area of our company. This success is not my own, but that of one of my team's in which I am extremely proud. One of the most important things I believe we can do for our customers is give them a customer experience like no other. This includes a commitment to excellence and professionalism, being a trusted advisor and offering innovative solutions and expert technical support. All of which this award represents, and that's what I love about Buckman and why I've been here so long – this real commitment to our customers and their success.

I'm also proud of the strides we've made in sustainability, this year we were named a finalist by the Business Intelligence Group's 2018 Sustainability Awards program. The Sustainability Awards honor those who have made sustainability an integral part of their business practice. We've also been honored by several global customers for our sustainability practices.

As with any manufacturer of chemicals, we understand the inherent risks of our industry and we make safety our most important value. Not just the safety of our associates, but our customers, too. Buckman's safety slogan is Safe by Choice and while we strive to always uphold it, we must never stop improving.

3) You have devoted much of the last year travelling and connecting with customers. Why is this important to you personally, and to the company professionally? How do you tailor your products and customer-service offerings, culturally?

I have found that engaging with Buckman associates and customers on every continent is the most important work I can do beyond establishing a new vision for our future. I really do enjoy meeting our customers and associates around the world and learning new things all the time. I am truly energized by these interactions and it is the best part of my job. I also realize that we cannot be successful without a strong link to what our customers need and what our local associates can do to make those customers successful. This is the heart of how we approach customer intimacy at Buckman. Each of our regions has unique challenges and needs and I want to be able to speak to each of them. A strong partnership with local management teams helps engage the local customer. Listening to their needs with our local management teams only makes us stronger as a company. We've had meaningful conversations with all the

customers we've engaged with over the past year...and the insights gained have been invaluable. We are better positioned to solve issues by knowing these local needs.

When our customers have an issue, whether it's seasonal or ongoing, new or complex, we tailor a solution for them. By working closely with our chemists around the world, we can provide fast and accurate results. Our Technical Services department boasts an industry-leading turnaround time for testing and we produce more than five thousand problem-solving reports annually. In addition, our research and development specialists work on traditional and smart products and chemistries, and bringing all of this to the market in a way that works in each region is critical.

Regarding cultural orientation, Buckman has a 70+ year history of global expansion one country and solution at a time. We intend to continue to grow on the back of our local experts and success with customers. While we are smaller than some chemical suppliers, we stay very focused on local customer needs. Our size and agility provide a huge advantage as we seek to fit seamlessly with all our customers no matter their country or industry.

4) Buckman emphasizes the importance of partnership with its customers. In what practicable ways do you encourage this? How does this focus differentiate Buckman from its competitors?

I think the ultimate expression of what we see as a successful partnership is the discipline we have around having a product line, both chemical and smart technology, as well as a team that is so highly trained and so committed to each customers' needs, problems and ultimate success. We strive for the experience our customers have with Buckman to surpass any other company, and frankly it's why we've been able to compete with companies much bigger than ourselves for so long, and I think why we are growing so much faster than the market is right now.

The many weeks I spent traveling solidified what I already knew: Buckman associates take pride in our culture and our customers see that. We strive to have strong relationships, because when you make the decision to become our customer, you are entering into a partnership with our entire organization, from sales to R&D to Technical Services, and everywhere in between.

A partnership in name only is just a claim. For us, one of the defining things that delivers a very different and, I hope, superior customer experience is that we care deeply about our customers' processes and about their overall business. We care deeply about our safety and about theirs. About our sustainability and

that of each customer. About doing things right, about solving the problems and helping our customers make money. When you really care about the right things the customer knows it and the partnership becomes real.

From our very first paper application in 1949, we have worked in partnership with our customers to find solutions to their problems and paths to new value streams. We've explored every challenge, suffered every defeat and taken great pride in every victory.

It doesn't matter what sort of solution we bring to the market tomorrow, it's still dependent on our deep knowledge of our customers' processes. We do this with partners on the ground working daily on customer processes. We invest this level of attention because we know the value it brings to the relationships we have with our customers. While our best-practice workshop series remains as active today as it has ever been, our opportunities for faster and deeper collaboration with customers excites us. Our digital solutions are a new kind of partnership, allowing us to provide insights and outcomes to helping our customers succeed. It's all very rewarding.

5) How does Buckman see its role as a facilitator of a paper company's objective of 'greening' its operations? What role does sustainability play in your day to day operations?

Buckman has been in the pulp and paper industry for many, many years and we understand how important it is to have a more sustainable future and we want to help the industries we serve do the same. We proactively work to replace harsh chemistries with more sustainable chemistries starting with the raw materials we source during product development.

Today, Buckman is a leader in enzymes, and we have won two Presidential Green Chemistry Challenge awards for our enzymatic technologies and are a finalist for another sustainability award for our application of enzymes in pulp bleaching.

We feel very strongly that we can look to nature, rather than manmade molecules, to supply our industry with a cleaner more efficient way to manufacture pulp and paper. Our new Vybrant® enzymatic bleaching technologies can help a mill reduce its discharge of chlorinated organics (AOX) by as much as 20%, making it much more environmentally-friendly.

Along with our commitment to creating greener chemistries, we are also committed to applying technology to improve their use and optimize our customers' process. This allows customers to get more accurate data and provides them with better process

control, ultimately reducing their environmental footprint. The right people and right chemistry used to be enough, but now data and technology are essential for both Buckman and our customers to become greener.

As a manufacturer, it is critical that we reduce our own impact on the environment. We report through the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) which gives us the structure by which to look at the things that are important to our stakeholders and engage with them on a regular basis. We have made great progress since setting our initial reduction goals for emissions, waste, energy and water consumption in 2010. Over the course of five years, we met and even exceeded some goals, and others we made significant strides toward reaching. We've set new reduction targets of 10% and I'm happy to say that we have already met our 2020 goal for water discharge intensity.

6) How does a chemical company become a smart technology company?

I have to admit it's not easy; but I think we're making strides so quickly because we continue to focus on what the solution does for the customer: be it chemical, personal, digital or a combination. We owe it to our customers and our planet to tailor our chemical applications for maximum process improvement and minimal economic and environmental impact. To achieve this, a chemical provider needs an entirely different level of control and line of sight on their chemistry and its impact on an industrial process. Digital solutions provide this layer of insights into our customers' processes that allow for the highly-customized solutions they need.

It also helps that the entire world now expects anything they buy to have a data component – from a residential alarm system to a refrigerator, we expect everything to be connected and controlled not just at home but also in the workplace.

In Buckman's nearly 75-year history, we've built up our systems, people and chemistries. Today though, customers need visibility into their operations. They want to ensure maximum operational efficiency with information, analysis and predictive data. That's why we are committed to digital transformation and how it can complement our existing chemistries and experts.

In the past, mill operators relied only on trial-and-error to evaluate new technology to determine a solution, but our technology helps take some of that uncertainty away and allows us to gather more accurate results and know what is going on, faster. When our smart technologies provide data and insights, they help both Buckman and the customer get to the real answer.

When a customer pairs Buckman's innovative chemistry with our smart products, our team can easily support the customer with troubleshooting and calibration. One example is our Online Natural Coating (ONC) capabilities that help improve Yankee coating management on tissue machines by giving operators real time ONC insights. Now customers can make proactive coating adjustments that can significantly improve runnability, reduce rejects, improve tissue quality and save blade life.

Adding smart technology to Buckman's arsenal is one of the many ways we listened to what our customers wanted and needed and acted on it.

7) How does Buckman stay ahead of the technological curve? What does continuous improvement mean to you when it comes to technology?

One word: collaboration. Collaboration is key at Buckman. When our sales team, Technical Services, R&D experts, Smart Products/Digital Enablement team and outside strategic alliances collaborate, we discover solutions as unique as our customers' issues.

Continuous improvement has been a core fundamental at Buckman for many years. Whether we are finding ways to improve internally or externally, it's ingrained in our culture. Regarding technology, continuous improvement means staying abreast of leading and bleeding-edge technology and working to find out how those can benefit our markets. That's why it's so important that we collaborate, not just within Buckman, but with our customers and strategic alliances.

Innovation in the digital paper industry will mean collaboration well beyond just person-to-person or company-to-company. Digital collaboration means connections between the paper machine and sensor, data feed and algorithm, and even insights and process controls. This depth of collaboration plays to Buckman's strengths. Buckman has always been a collaborator providing connections between customer processes, our technical experts and chemical solutions. Digital collaboration fuels Buckman's innovation on a new level. We will shift from a chemical-only solutions provider by integrating both chemical and digital solutions where it adds the most value to our customers. This collaboration in the digital space will include sensor ecosystems, real-time data feeds, cloud-based storage, advanced analytics and live process control. Eventually, we will have predictive forward-thinking solutions fueled by deep digital insights paired with our industry experts. Innovation will be accelerated with the number of connections in the customer process. While we are

excited about the future, we are comforted knowing this is how Buckman has always partnered with our customers.

8) What role does smart technology and data play in Buckman's operations? How did the acquisition of CiDRA Chemical Management support your data and research objectives?

Just as our customers are looking for more connectivity, data, insights and control so are we. Our focus on digital transformation includes several internal technological improvements, like digitizing and streamlining our entire production and delivery process. Sales associates use online ordering through Buckman OnSite® to ensure accurate and timely communications with customer service. Bulk tank monitoring and more are all improving the way we operate which in turn improves how we serve our markets. When we acquired CiDRA Chemical Management Inc. in September 2017, it was the largest acquisition in Buckman history. The technology ECHOWISE™, formerly known as SonarTrac®, is a patented and very differential solution for our customers. ECHOWISE helps us understand, adapt and respond to our customers' chemical and process demands with agility and creativity. This acquisition was a clear indication of just how serious we are about becoming a digitally-enabled provider.

While the ECHOWISE solution is just one of many digital solutions we have at Buckman, it will allow us to stretch and test our new digital vision. Our associates are sharpening their digital skills and accelerating their own digital journeys. The entire company is excited and our recent market growth with ECHOWISE is an early indicator that we are on the right path.

9) What can you tell us about Echowise™ and what efficiencies it brings to your customers?

ECHOWISE is a gamechanger and is virtually unmatched in the marketplace. What sets this sonar technology apart from other monitoring options is its innovative, non-invasive design. It does not have any moving parts, nor does it come in direct contact with process fluids.

ECHOWISE is highly-reliable and accurately provides real-time continuous measurements of entrained air. With it, we (Buckman and our customers) are now better able to turn data into insights and insights into action in the form of advanced process control. This smart product allows our technical experts to gain access into our customers' core processes and greatly reduce the need for trial-and-error.

Customers are already experiencing the positive effects of ECHOWISE. We recently introduced a new brown stock washing defoamer at a customer site in North America. By using ECHOWISE, our sales team was able to demonstrate that our defoamer improved process performance compared to competitive programs. But in addition, ECHOWISE demonstrated that a drainage issue, which was originally believed to be from entrained air, was actually a hydraulic/mechanical bottleneck. Our team used this knowledge to develop a control scheme that offset the issue which not only allowed the mill to increase production, but also maintain efficiency and use our chemistry more effectively. I think this example shows the power of using a combination of process knowledge, technology and data to identify and get in front of the problem before it occurs.

10) Are there any other smart technologies at Buckman now?

In the paper industry we have a suite of unique technologies that are designed to solve some of the most challenging problems in pulp, tissue and packaging arenas ranging from ECHOWISE that monitors entrained air to optimize the defoaming process to our Online Natural Coating system which monitors the amount of natural coating in tissue. These systems interface with our Buckman Onsite platform and work in conjunction with our chemistry to optimize the papermaking process at a whole new level, and our customers are seeing the results.

The Buckman Recovery Boiler Advisor (RBA) is a digital platform that provides operators insights into the existence of a leak. The RBA leverages the customer's DCS process data and continuously sends insights to the customer's operators allow them to monitor for the presence of a leak.

Our remote process monitoring system, Buckman OnSite, is another smart technology that can improve many aspects of a customer's process. It provides insights via online dashboards, alerts and reports. Insights are generated using Buckman OnSite's robust data collection engine that can capture automated and manual process data. We developed this system in-house and use a highly-secure cloud-based technology to run it.

As mentioned earlier, our ONC monitoring system gives operators real time ONC measurements, so they can make proactive coating adjustments on the Yankee. Now, Buckman representatives can proactively troubleshoot with a considerable amount of baseline data.

We're constantly working on our smart product offerings and have several products we're excited to bring to market, like

online monitoring for felt cleaning, real time measurements of scaling tendency and virtual reality goggles that give us remote visibility at customer sites.

11) What can you tell us about your recruitment practices? How do you attract and retain talent?

We are very thoughtful in our recruitment and hiring process because our goal is to hire new people with new talents and expertise who will thrive in the Buckman environment. We look beyond the knowledge and experience needed to fill a specific position and consider the individual's ability to integrate into our dynamic ecosystem. The world is changing, industry is changing and being successful at Buckman requires the ability to continually adapt, learn and grow.

Our hiring process works to ensure candidates are the right fit for Buckman and that we are the right fit for them. For that reason, our selection process includes several assessments and interviews and is designed to give the candidate a chance to learn about our culture.

Buckman is proud of our reputation as an ethical, environmentally conscious corporate citizen. We are well-known in the communities in which we work and live for providing volunteer service hours and expertise. This community involvement extends across the globe creating a sense of purpose that shapes the character of Buckman and our associates. And we are well-known among competitors, customers and suppliers for our ethical business practices.

Buckman associates have many development opportunities. We are recognized year after year by Chief Learning Officer magazine as a company that heavily invests in learning and development, allowing us to help our associates fulfill their career aspirations and grow within Buckman. We have the Wall of Honor at our global headquarters where associates' names are carved into granite after they've been here for 25 years. This is a major accomplishment and we add names to the wall every year.

We truly support and care about one another. We hire the best people in the market, develop them with the best programs and keep them with the best culture and work environment we can possibly create. We also take our work environment very seriously by having a welcoming, friendly culture that supports work-life integration. However, our people truly stay because they believe in our vision and get excited about our current growth and what that means for our future. Our digital transformation points to a future journey all our associates want to take at Buckman.

12) In what ways have you seen Buckman's culture change since you joined the company in 2002?

The Buckman culture has evolved over time but we have always remained true to what's most important to us – our customers and our people. To me, culture is about values that are demonstrated by our behaviors and norms. Over the last 10 years, our behaviors and norms at Buckman have been driven by the 7 principles of highly effective teamwork. These principles, starting with 100% responsibility, have driven an intense continuous improvement mindset in everything we do, from how we serve our customers to how we innovate to how we develop and grow our talent. The result is a deeper collaboration and faster execution that is fueled by an exciting strategic vision and accelerated by digital transformation and an agile approach to innovation.

13) What are your objectives for Buckman in the next year? Five years? Ten?

Industry 4.0 is the most significant opportunity – or threat – to all organizations. When I became CEO in 2017, I was very honored, excited and anxious about Buckman's future. I learned a lot about our markets, customers, businesses and associates around the world, and I know we are destined to do so much more.

Our trusted advisor position relies heavily on digitization and smart products. The acquisition of CCMI was our first step in that direction, but we are continuing to actively build our digital talent pool and fast-track product development.

Next year, we will continue to focus on our customers, product innovation, problem-solving and learning through a culture of knowledge sharing. I want to deliver value for our customers both today and tomorrow and to do this we must ramp up our capabilities regarding innovative chemistry and smart technology. We also will remain committed to safety. My goal is to make sure our employees arrive home safely, everyday. Our Global Safety, Health and Environment team is armed with tried and true policies and procedures and have created a culture of safety for Buckman and our customers.

In five years, Buckman will be an integrated solutions provider, not just a chemical provider. This means we will have entirely new customer relationships we don't see in the market today, but we'll grow with the industry like we always have. There will be customers where we only provide data-based insights and others where traditional chemical sales will still dominate. In five years, I also see Buckman as a global leader in providing a superior customer experience that is supported by our industry

experts, smart technology and chemistry. I see us being able to continue meeting and exceeding customer needs, like improved profitability, production and sustainability. These are all areas where we are currently succeeding and where we plan to continue dedicating more resources to promote their improvement.

In ten years, I see Buckman as the go-to company for new and differential chemistries and smart solutions. I see us as the provider of proactive prevention, not just problem solving. And I see us being the premier solution partner and expert in what customers want and need by developing unique, differentiated and leading-edge technologies.

Overall, it's my goal to become a digitally-enabled problem-solving company, whether that solution is human, chemical, digital or a combination of all three.

Our digital transformation will create a greatly expanded ecosystem of process interconnections between Buckman and our customers. Each of these connections will drive insights and engagement... not only in-person or via chemical but also in the digital realm. We will be more connected with our customers than ever before. With over 70 years in the business, we know this sort of collaboration with our customers leads to great solutions.

14) On a lighter note, what can you tell us about your non-professional self? What was the most recent book you read? When you have free time, how do you enjoy spending it? Where will you take your next non-work-related trip?

The most recent book I read is *Talent Wins* by Ram Charan, Dominic Barton & Dennis Carey. I believe that talent does in fact differentiate companies and win, so I was immediately captured by the title of the book and I have always admired one of its authors, Ram Charan.

In my free time, I just enjoy spending time with my family – as long as I am with them, I am happy and can disconnect from work, whether we just relax at home or take a vacation in an exotic location. Born in South Africa, we love wildlife, mountains and the beach. I also enjoy losing myself in a book and working on a home project. ■

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