

Insee Cement, Sri Lanka

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INSEE Cement, also known as Siam City Cement (Lanka) is the only fully integrated cement manufacturer in Sri Lanka. Prasad Piyadigama, Organisation and Human Resource Director speaks about the strength of the people at INSEE and the company's corporate culture.

How do the INSEE Cement employees stand out among Sri Lanka's workforce?

We stand out due to our passion and belief in what we deliver, and our attitude, focused on challenging the status quo. The economy is not necessarily performing admirably. So, we need to be courageous and continuously strive to do better.

We need to look at new customer segments, new product offerings, how we will optimise our performance in terms of cost reduction and process improvement. We require a group of people who will face this challenge and deliver a solution.

What are the attributes that INSEE Cement looks for in its employees?

While we do consider technical knowledge and experience, above all what we need is a confident attitude, passion, the heart and soul that they put into the job.

They need to bring in a willingness to learn, to challenge and to change. We don't want people to continue to do things because that was the way they used to do in the past.

What are the programmes you have in place to develop the employees' skill and knowledge?

Firstly, we get the people with the right attitude. And then, we give them the necessary knowledge. It's driven through the INSEE Academy, established about one and half years ago with the objective of accelerating the growth of 'home grown talent' at INSEE.

We ensure that our people go through customised long-term learning programmes; There are assessments and on the job projects at different points in time, and it is certified and assessed.

To support that, we invest about 50 million rupees every year. Over the last three years, we would have invested slightly more than a million US dollars on training

and development alone.

We also send people on secondments; long-term moves from one country to another. We send people on three to six-months employee exchange programmes.

We Need To Look At New Customer Segments, New Product Offerings, How We Will Optimise Our Performance In Terms Of Cost Reduction And Process Improvement.

Furthermore, we are shifting to e-learning, because each individual is unique, their learning styles are unique, the learning preferences differ. The one-size-fits-all solution doesn't work. Hence, we are heavily shifting our training to online learning where people can take this particular training whenever they have time at their own pace.

But irrespective of the methodology, they still have to qualify at the end of the day through the certification.

We are not alone; it's great being a member of the largest cement manufacturer in Southeast Asia. There's always learning and collaboration that happen across borders, continuous pressure to learn from each other.

How do you maintain a positive working environment?

It's absolutely critical to have a positive environment. It's about having the right people within the organisation who believe in the products and services that we offer. The right people with the combination of world-renowned products and services create a very powerful outcome.

If you look at our brands, INSEE Sanstha Blended cement is catered for the Individual House Builders sector. We have already started manufacturing slag-blended cement products in Ruhunu Cement Plant under our renowned product brands INSEE Mahaweli Marine Plus, INSEE Rapid Flow Plus and INSEE Extra Plus accordingly with the retail and industrial focus. These are fantastic, best-in-class

products that we have and manufacture in Sri Lanka. They are capable of competing with any international product.

When you have the right people who believe in these products, and who are proud of making these high quality products come alive, creating solutions – building brighter futures for our motherland, that serves to create a very powerful chemistry.

Can you explain the concept behind the ‘INSEE MY STRENGTH’ Employer Brand?

We believe that each individual is unique, and bring a different set of attributes to the organisation. We are diverse; but that diversity has to make a difference and converge. And that convergence happens through – ‘INSEE MY STRENGTH’. Each of us are different, but ‘INSEE MY STRENGTH’ binds us together based on inclusion and being stronger.

We believe in four value pillars which are the corner stones of our Employer Brand.

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The first is our Purpose. We are here as a group of employees because we believe that we are creating a better future for our customers, communities and the environment we live in – ‘Building Brighter Futures’. That’s the main drive.

The second is our drive for performance. We believe we can do better everyday through a continuous learning and unlearning process. That is why we spend significant resources on people development and on creating a learning culture.

As such, Learning is our third value pillar. The fourth pillar is Status; we are proud that we are the number 1 Cement manufacturer in Sri Lanka producing the country’s most preferred cement brand Sanstha Cement.

Those are the four areas that we've looked at in building this concept called INSEE MY STRENGTH; we are stronger because of INSEE. And we are committed to propel the company forward.

For any company to succeed, a strong corporate culture needs to be maintained. What are your thoughts on this?

Corporate culture is a must. It's up to the senior teams within the organisation to define the corporate culture, and to ensure that that culture is reflected in all its operations. You need to have that particular culture transcend to all levels within the organisation.

It's also driven by how we connect with people, the communication channels that you have within the organisation to connect the people with the organisation's purpose, plans and performance, and equally importantly is how we celebrate success in terms of rewarding and recognising the exceptional performance of the employees.

At INSEE, we have some unique mechanisms in place. We have an internal social media platform for the business – 'Workplace' by Facebook. Workplace enables us to reach out to all employees on a real-time basis. Apart from connecting people across different geographies and levels it also helps us to recognise exceptional achievements on the spot.

The other is the INSEE rewards, a recognition program that enables you to earn points on exceptional performance which can be redeemed to secure products or services through any POS anywhere in the world.

We have our INSEEE Awards Night, a pinnacle event at an organisational level on an annual basis. These mechanisms help us to further embed a winning corporate culture and bond the people strongly together. A high performance organisation is always driven by a strong corporate culture.

What is in the future for INSEE?

We are looking at an exciting future – expanding our manufacturing footprint with the commissioning of the new Galle Cement Grinding Plant, diversification into new segments such as Ready Mix (RMX) Concrete together with the INSEE Ecocycle Lanka venturing into industrial environment solutions and many more. All in all it's about long term growth delivered through passionate people and teams.