

COVER STORY

# RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOUR

Thinking out of the box is imperative for **Dev Bajpai, Executive Director, Legal & Corporate Affairs, HUL** to find solutions that are in line with the company values

**H**UL's legal function is tasked with not just partnering with the business for spotting opportunities for growth and mitigating risks but also ensuring that the organisation lives its values. The company has a Code of Business Principles (COBP) that guides it and lays down the standard of conduct expected from each employee in the organisation. As the executive director for legal and corporate affairs, it is Dev Bajpai's key role to manifest this in the company.

"Through our code, we invite external stakeholders to judge our behaviour. We ensure that every employee's conduct is of mutual respect. If we come across deviations from the code of what is expected of employees, the issues are dealt with by upholding the letter and spirit of the code at all times," he says.

The four specific areas in line with these values are making positive impact, continuous commitment, setting out aspirations and working with others. "We aim to make a positive impact in many ways — through our brands, our commercial operations and relationships, our voluntary contributions, and through how we engage with society. We are also committed to continuously working towards our long-term goal of developing a sustainable business," says Bajpai.

**“**HUL has a clear purpose — to make sustainable living commonplace. Our purpose inspires our vision, and our values of integrity, respect, responsibility and pioneering hold us in good stead. In our journey to achieve these, our actions are underpinned by our values. One of the things I have always admired about HUL is that it does not make you do anything you might personally consider wrong; one's own values are never compromised. HUL helps you to practice the right behaviour and do the right things.”



**Brand Protection**

One of the problems that FMCG companies face is counterfeiting and different forms of unfair competition in the marketplace that mislead consumers. HUL has taken on-ground action against this in a big way; it also worked with the government to make the regulatory regime enabling. One of its first steps was educating children in schools about Intellectual Property Rights. Over the last couple of years, it has reached out to over 5,000 students across the country. Besides, it has trademark investigators who go to the marketplace and look for spurious/counterfeit products. Similarly, to fight against illegal imports, the company worked with law enforcement agencies such as Customs and Excise to create deterrents.

In addition to the COBP, HUL also has a supplier code that comprises 11 principles covering business integrity and responsibilities towards employees, consumers and the environment. "We want to work with suppliers who have values similar to our own and work towards the same standards we do," he adds.

In 2008, HUL launched the Ombudsmen Scheme to resolve disputes that had crept in over decades. "We appointed five retired high court judges who had experience of alternate disputes resolution. While doing so, the company took the approach of complying with the order of the Ombudsman even if the decision went against the company and the other party retained the option to continue to agitate the matter in the court if not satisfied with the decision," explains Bajpai.

This is one example of responsible behaviour. He asserts that over the years, this has had a positive impact on consumers.

"As an organisation, we do not want to do only 'what is legal' but also 'what is right', and when we ask ourselves the question of 'what is right', we look at the issue from the lens of consumer, fairness, propriety, adherence to our values, and our reputation," says Bajpai. **BW**

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