



Gaurav Khandekar

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Summary

Manufacturing and product development leader with 6.7 years across 4 progressive roles at a leading Indian FMCG conglomerate, spanning manufacturing operations, people leadership, product development, IP management, and CAPEX/project execution. Led a unionized workforce of 86, served as the primary management interface with unions, maintained zero major IR issues, onboarded the division's first women shop-floor operators, and achieved a division-best 95% EHS score with zero lost-time accidents. Deployed an AI-based predictive quality model that delivered a 12-year high in quality performance and reduced consumer complaints by 74% and the solution is being replicated across other manufacturing units. Led the end-to-end development and launch of India's first CDSCO-approved NRT product. Named assignee on 4 patents for new product development. Executed ₹23+ crore of CAPEX and delivered ₹7.5 crore in indigenization savings.

Professional Experience

Manager – Primary Manufacturing | ITC Limited | Pune

Oct 2024 – Mar 2026

- Led Primary Manufacturing operations for a 24×7 facility, managing 86 personnel (11 managers, 23 unionized operators, 52 contract workers) supplying the Pune plant and 2 contract manufacturing units.
- Delivered the division's highest throughput in 12 years (7,177 kg/hr) and record annual output of 10.46 KT and achieved 100% OTIF (On-time in Full) dispatches while reducing downtime to 0.42 min/ton.
- Developed Golden Batch, an AI-driven predictive quality model that delivered a 12-year high product quality score (94.26%), reduced moisture variation by 77%, and reduced taste related consumer complaints by 74%. The solution was replicated across other manufacturing units.
- Delivered ₹48.5 lakh annual savings through raw material optimization, indigenization, and in-house engineering.
- Executed CAPEX of INR 95 L for capacity upgrades; and prepared business cases for upcoming CAPEX of INR 3.2 Cr.
- Contractor Management: Managed 3 AMCs worth INR 3.2 Cr/year for housekeeping, logistics and infestation control. I reviewed and approved SLAs and ensured there was zero production downtime attributable to contracted workforce.
- Achieved the division's highest EHS audit score (95%) with zero lost-time accidents and successfully carried out cGMP recertification with zero major HACCP/cGMP non-conformities.
- Led industrial relations for a unionized workforce, maintaining zero major IR issues.
- Introduced the division's first three women shop-floor operators and co-developed the shop-floor maternity policy with HR.

Manager – Product Technology | ITC Limited | Bengaluru

Jul 2023 – Sep 2024

- Led end-to-end development of **Nicosure**, a nicotine gum and lozenge brand and **India's first CDSCO-approved NRT product**. I ran formulation and prototyping cycles across concentrations, flavours, and formats, and established the **scale-up supply chain** for manufacturing.
- Drove **ethnic flavour portfolio of 5 variants** for the shorter-length stick and completed **shelf-life studies** establishing product stability data which was critical for launch readiness.
- Ran **market research and competitive intelligence across the top 5 global markets** to track evolving product portfolios, launches, and cost trends, and monitored **single-use plastic directives and emerging regulation** to flag trends introduced by global majors.
- Led **overseas market expansion**: evaluated **Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Nepal, and UAE** for PR&D setup, machine refurbishment needs, and CAPEX estimates with overseas managers. I built the **UAE and Nepal supply chain plan** comprising of sourcing strategy, cost modelling, local vendor identification and identified **contract manufacturers to produce sticks locally at far lower landed cost**, cutting dependence on India-sourced inventory burdened by freight and import duty.
- Led development of **3 miniaturized heating systems** –with international partners (**INR 4 Cr**), finalised specifications, ran **Freedom-to-Operate analysis** to check patent infringement.
- Executed **INR 23 Cr CAPEX**: commissioned laser ventilation system of **INR 7 Cr**, 2 refurbished making lines (**7 mn sticks/month** capacity), and Flat 10s/20s packers.

Assistant Manager – New Generation Products | ITC Limited | Bengaluru

Feb 2022 – Jun 2023

- Served as the primary interface with global OEM/ODM partners for a new product category and commissioned a stick making line and thus adding 7 million/sticks of capacity.
- Led daily operations of the pilot plant comprising 6 technical associates and testing labs for timely prototyping and delivery of product samples for sensory and analytical evaluation.
- Built indigenous vendor base for refurbishment and modification of cigarette manufacturing machines domestically — identifying, qualifying, and onboarding Indian vendors capable of machine modifications previously sourced only from expensive overseas OEM suppliers. Generated one-time cost saving of ₹7 Cr; reduced lead times and improved flexibility for future modifications
- Completed FTO (Freedom to Operate) analysis across 183 patents for newly developed products and developed circumvention strategies to ensure infringement free products. Filed 4 patent applications covering product design and heating technologies.

Production Executive – Primary Manufacturing | ITC Limited | Munger

Nov 2019 – Jan 2022

- **Productivity & LTA:** Drove productivity gain of 4 manpower per shift through time-motion studies and redesigned workstation practices. The new practices were implemented via 2020 Long Term Agreement (LTA) with union which led to the annualised savings of INR 38.4 L/year across both shifts. I Drafted new SOPs for all workstation operations post-LTA.
- **Automation & Digitisation (INR 3.5 Cr):** Implemented skip stacker robot, de-caser robot, automated skip presser, CFC filling station automation (OCM area), and HMI mirroring from casing kitchen to conditioning cylinder.
- **New Process:** Established complete end-to-end manufacturing process for RJL — a new clove-based tobacco variant with fundamentally different processing requirements, developed for clove sticks with no prior blueprint at the factory. Designed manning requirements and negotiated special manning proposal with union via LTA. Led CAPEX installation expanding capacity from 200 kg/day to 6,000 kg/day and scaled batch processing size from 2tons to 4tons.
- **COVID-19 Leadership (ITC CEO Achievers Award):** Stepped into an expanded leadership role when COVID-19 severely reduced management and workforce availability. Negotiated a 12-hour shift model with unions, maximizing output from available manpower while maintaining statutory compliance and uninterrupted supply to downstream units. Awarded the ITC CEO Achievers Award for ensuring business continuity during the pandemic.
- **Innovation:** Demonstrated the efficacy of **CO₂-based fumigation** as a safer and more effective alternative to phosphine for controlling resistant beetle infestations, enabling its adoption for bulk fumigation. Recognized among the **Top 10** projects at the **ITC National Supervisory Skills Competition**.

Education

B.Tech, Electrical Engineering – College of Engineering Pune (COEP) | India

2015 – 19

Accomplishments and Awards

- Assignee on 4 ITC patents
- ITC CEO Achievers Award for exceptional contribution to maintain business continuity during COVID-19 and smooth implementation of long-term agreement during COVID-19
- 1st Prize, ITC Divisional Quality Competition (PACE 4.0) for achieving highest quality score and 74% reduction in test complaints
- Among top 10 in National Supervisory Skills Competition for implementing sustainable CO₂ based fumigation

License & Certifications

- Excel Skills for Business: Advanced
- Business Writing
- Pre-MBA Statistics
- Generative AI & Prompting
- Engineering for EHS
- HACCP & cGMP
- POSH
- Leading Diverse Teams

Co/Extra-curricular

Profile Committee Member, PGPM 2026–27, IIM Ahmedabad – curate and present batch profiles to recruiters.