



Gaurav Nayan Khandekar

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Summary

Operations and product development leader with 6.8 years at ITC Limited, with expertise in operational excellence, new product development and project management. Managed large unionized shop-floor teams and cross-functional projects that delivered operational excellence, digital transformation, process improvement, cost optimization and product commercialization. I developed an AI-based predictive quality model, which was replicated across manufacturing units, and led the end-to-end development of a nicotine-replacement product. I am assignee on 3 patents for product innovation. And I advanced shop-floor diversity by onboarding the division's first 3 women operators.

Professional Experience

Manager – Primary Manufacturing | ITC Limited | Pune

Oct 2024 – Mar 2026

- Led manufacturing operations with **86 personnel across managerial, unionized and contractual workforce** and delivered record **7,177 kg/hr throughput and highest annual output**.
- Developed an **AI-based predictive process model** to optimize equipment set-points, which delivered a **12-year-high-quality score of 94.26% and reduced process variability by 77%**. The solution was **replicated across ITC units**.
- Delivered **₹48.47 L cost savings** through raw-material optimization, spare indigenization, in-house engineering and AMC contract extension at existing rates.
- Executed **₹95 L capacity-upgrade CAPEX** and developed business cases for **₹3.2 Cr** of upcoming investments.
- Coordinated **Logistics, Procurement and Production** for an 8-day shutdown. Aligned inventory pre-build and treatment of **1,400 T stock** to ensure uninterrupted downstream supply.
- Managed union engagement with **zero major IR issues** and partnered with **HR** to onboard the division's first 3 women shop-floor employees and co-develop a maternity policy.
- Achieved a division-high **95% EHS audit score** with zero lost-time accidents and zero HACCP/cGMP recertification non-conformities.

Manager – Product Technology | ITC Limited | Bengaluru

Jul 2023 – Sep 2024

- Directed **end-to-end development of a nicotine-replacement product** from **market research and product benchmarking to prototyping** and selection of 2 preferred flavours for **commercial launch**.
- Coordinated **Marketing, Packaging, Manufacturing, Regulatory, Quality and external partners** to build the scale-up supply chain and deliver product milestones on time.
- Developed **3 miniaturized heating systems with international technology partners (₹4 Cr)** from product specifications through prototype testing and IP assessment.
- Executed **₹23 Cr CAPEX** to build manufacturing, packing and testing capabilities, including a **₹7 Cr laser system and 7 million sticks/month prototyping capacity**.
- Developed **UAE and Nepal supply-chain plans** across sourcing, cost assessment and local vendors. Identified overseas contract manufacturers for **lower-cost local production**.

Assistant Manager – New Generation Products | ITC Limited | Bengaluru

Feb 2022 – Jun 2023

- Served as **single point of contact for global OEM/ODM partners** across product evaluation, prototype development and supply-chain establishment for a new product category.
- Built an **indigenous vendor base** for machine refurbishment and modification, delivering **₹7 Cr one-time savings** and reducing lead times versus overseas OEM sourcing.
- Refurbished and commissioned a **prototyping line with 7 million sticks/month capacity** to enable rapid product-development trials without external facilities.
- Managed daily pilot-plant operations with 6 Technical Associates and ensured timely delivery of samples for sensory and analytical evaluation.
- Identified the **root cause of Bluetooth connectivity failures** in a heating-system companion app and recommended hardware/software changes that were implemented.

Production Executive – Primary Manufacturing | ITC Limited | Munger

Nov 2019 – Jan 2022

- Managed production shifts with **55 workers and external service providers** and ensured uninterrupted supply to **2 downstream manufacturing units**.
- Improved productivity by **4 personnel per shift** through time-motion studies and workstation redesign and delivered **₹38.4 L annual savings** through union LTA.
- Executed **₹3.5 Cr automation and digitisation projects** across robotics, material handling and process controls.
- Established an **end-to-end manufacturing process for a new product variant** and expanded capacity **30times from 200 to 6,000 kg/day**.
- Restructured shift operations with the union during COVID-19 to maximize constrained manpower and ensure uninterrupted supply.

Education

B. Tech, Electrical Engineering – College of Engineering Pune (COEP) | India | 2015–2019

Accomplishments and Awards

- Named assignee on 3 ITC patents for product and technology innovations.
- Earned the ITC CEO Achievers Award for business continuity during COVID-19 and successful implementation of practices under the Long-Term Agreement.
- Won 1st Prize at the ITC Divisional Quality Competition (PACE 4.0) for consistent product quality across manufacturing shifts.
- Ranked among the Top 10 at the ITC National Supervisory Skills Competition for CO₂-based controlled fumigation as a sustainable alternative to phosphine.
- Earned Outstanding Rating (5/5) twice, ITC's highest performance rating, across manufacturing leadership roles at Pune and Munger.

License & Certifications

- **Excel Skills for Business:** Macquaire University
- **Business Writing:** University of Colorado Boulder
- **Six Sigma Green Belt:** KPMG

Co/Extra-curricular

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