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**THE LEGENDS OF GEOSPATIAL INDUSTRY**

*A GEOSPATIAL MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS INITIATIVE*

# Hall of Fame.





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**HEN IT COMES TO** choosing a career path, India has a long tradition of following the family practise. It is pretty common to see a doctor's son taking up medicine or a chartered accountant's daughter joining her father's firm. So, when the son of the

Dean of the city's medical college and the grandson of the state's most prominent physician decided to break the family tradition, quite a few eyebrows were raised.

No, it wasn't that Kamal K Singh was a rebel. He was just fortunate enough to have a mother who refused to push her child into taking the conventional route to success. "My mother said: I have seen your grandfather minting money. He made tremendous name for himself, but he had no time for himself or family. Your grandfather left everything he owned to your father and that money is helping us to support you. Otherwise in his own salary today, we can't afford to spend ₹1,000 a month for the education which you are getting. So my advise is, do something different," recalls Singh, who then went on to pursue mechanical engineering.

But, even as he was studying to be an engineer, Singh had decided to take the untrodden path. "I was probably 17 when I decided I will do my own business," he says. "I was a

# ROLLING IN THE DEEP

topper throughout my college days, but I never gave a single campus interview."

It wasn't long before Harvard University Business School beckoned Singh to earn a Master of Business Administration degree along with a hefty scholarship. With a few months to kill before the course was to begin, Singh set up a steel rolling mill on the behest of a family friend. When the time came for school to begin, Singh had to choose between the life of an executive in the United States and his dream of setting-up his own business.

The first-generation entrepreneur chose well when he decided to stay back in India. Because taking that humble

## Chairman's Statement

We are at a pivotal point in history. Thanks to the pace of the Internet, and the explosion of mobile commerce among things we know is undergoing dramatic change. Change, in fact, is no longer something to which we have to adapt, it is now the environment in which we live.

At Rolta we have undertaken a transformation that will be regarded as one of our most significant ones. It is in 2002, we began a process of strategic review and architectural audit leading to a number of key decisions on what we could continue to do and what we had to stop. The outcome was a strategy to combine our business into a single, clear, focused, and focused, on an IP-led core.

Today, we have transformed all our businesses by riding IP - Computerized Engineering, Enterprise IT, and Defense & Security, are all much stronger and due to this transformation. For example, the Computerized Engineering is much more holistic as we are able to do custom requirements of both, the emerging markets that are built around services for data creation as well as of developed markets, which means IP for data creation, while in the Engineering domain, we have opened up much larger markets, due to our ability to now very well address the CAPX requirements of various players through our reliable and operational excellence solution, in addition to our traditional services offering for CAPX projects.

But the largest transformation has happened in our Enterprise IT business, where we have built world-class capabilities at the front end in North America, low market entry, enabling and differentiating our cutting-edge technologies like, Real Time Business Analytics, Big Data, Cloud, Mobile, Business Intelligence, Enterprise Performance Management and Software Defined Infrastructure. We have done this by acquiring companies that were at a much lower cost than the others, also, our cost of ownership, which has been once supplemented with a world-class capability.

Today, when our hands are such of these businesses on a worldwide basis, we are in a very exceptional, especially due to this transformation. It is because our ability to combine these businesses with each other, and across various IP and service industries, several times have done this in a very strong competitive edge.

This combination has allowed Rolta to build a solid Defense and Security business. Today, we are one of the very few other companies that have been notified to bid for some



In the past one year alone, we have seen very significant multi-million dollar contracts with industry leading customers, across heterogeneous IT industries, where we have been able to combine our Computerized Engineering and IT capabilities.

For example, Memphis Light Gas & Water, USA chose Rolta for a \$150 million project, due to our ability to provide end-to-end business transformation to MLCW, combined around integrating business a GIS solution by leveraging the capabilities of Rolta's Computerized Engineering and IT expertise.

Similarly, another order, Northern Power Grid, UK, in London (Hardware component) has awarded contracts of over \$100 million to Rolta, for delivering a solution that also advantage of Rolta's Computerized Engineering and

and The Dow Chemical Company. We are executing a multi-million dollar contract from India to implement a comprehensive Engineering Services, by seamlessly combining our Engineering and IT expertise.

As we have transformed our offerings stack to an IP-led core, we have also maintained our ability to take these offerings to world markets. For example, we today have a game-changing partnership with SAP that allows us to take advantage of their sales organization and customer base. We are one of the very few selected strategic global partners of SAP, who can leverage SAP's worldwide sales engine to provide their customers with state-of-the-art Business Analytics and Big Data solutions by exploiting the power of SAP technology bundled with Rolta IP through our reliable and high-value solution, in a much, one-to-one, as well as scalability, etc.

Milcom Power (M & C), Petrochemicals, Building, Financial Services & Insurance, Retail, Manufacturing & Healthcare.

Our journey of transformation has been robust. It has taken time, significant investments, and has been without any shortcuts. But no end result has been very promising - we today have a most future-focused model, which is built on processes through sales of Rolta IP-led solutions, rather than being dependent only on services. We have thus been able to successfully monetize our investments for this transformation - through increased margins, higher customer satisfaction, and sustained customer retention. We expect to continue to strengthen our relationships and accelerating the transformation in the coming years.



*Rolta today is a world leader in its field, thanks to Singh's leadership and vision*



*One thing Singh had was unflinching support of his wife... who stood by him through thick and thin*



*A happy family life has been a core inner strength for Singh*

Rolta borrows initials from my grandfather, mother and father's names. I always wanted a name which is very easy to pronounce; is not a tongue-twister and can be accepted internationally

steel works plant to the heights of high technology. Singh has led from the front the four-decade-long transformation of one of India's most iconic companies – Rolta India.

At that time, though, Singh's father wasn't too pleased with this decision. So, Singh took refuge in his mother's positive affirmations and his wife's unflinching support. "My wife always understood my decision; she has given me much-needed strength."

A few years down the line, Singh learnt that steel wasn't strong enough to build him a business empire. The cyclical nature of the business meant that whatever Singh earned in 2-3 years would go into sustaining the business for the next couple of years. Singh sold off the company, but not the firm's name. "Rolta borrows initials from my grandfather, mother and father's names. I always wanted a name which is very easy to pronounce; is not a tongue twister and can be accepted internationally."

In 1982, Rolta started as data-processing company. "Technology is something I was very passionate about. In late '70s, to buy IBM 1401 and start putting into steel plant and using it for the various MIS and other things was unheard of, and I was doing that. And that is where I went. I started an IT company. Within a year





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*Singh being felicitated by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Former Prime Minister of India, with the National Export Award*

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we were doing software development, we were providing packages. And within two years we were doing all kinds of turnkey services," Singh recollects.

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
 KK SINGH GAVE UP STUDYING IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL TO BECOME AN ENTREPRENEUR

Not that this business came without a set of challenges. In those days, IT was a taboo. It was supposed to be taking jobs away. "Our competition in those days was also TCS. They were the big daddy of the business. I used to get jitters thinking if they decided to cut down their price, what will we do?"

So, to dispel the competition and add value to his business, Singh again started brainstorming. "Advanced countries like America and Europe were utilizing CAD/CAM/GIS, but



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*Singh is a regular speaker at top conferences*



*Singh being  
felicitated by Dr APJ  
Abdul Kalam, 11th  
President of India,  
with the Geospatial  
Entrepreneurship  
Award*



*Singh being honored  
with the Lifetime  
Achievement Award  
by Hamid Ansari,  
Vice President of India*



these technologies were nowhere to be found in India." So, Rolta became the first company to introduce GIS solutions in India in 1985.

What followed was a huge contract. "Our first customer was the Survey of India. We gave them a customized Digital GIS system worth \$10 million in those days, with complete support coming from us and our exclusive partners, like Intergraph."



At GeoSmart India 2016: Inaugurating the 'India Industry Report'

Even as orders flowed in, Rolta realized the government was not catching up in policy. The restrictive license raj regime was on the verge of spelling a death knell for the nascent industry. Something had to be done.

Since the whole process of importing hardware and software was taking 2-3 years, Rolta decided to build engineering workstations in India in 1989. The company set up assembly plants, imported components and tied-up with Intergraph technology and software at a huge cost of millions of dollars. That one decision transformed the company's success rate. One of the first customers for indigenous systems was the state-owned telecommunications service provider in the metro cities of Mumbai and New Delhi MTNL.

"Everywhere we went and our systems got welcomed with open arms. We captured 70-80% of the market in those 3-4 years. That's how we became kind of a market leader. The engineering workstations which we produced were also used for engineering plant design, and we captured 85% of that market," he explains.

However, the man soon realized he was missing the woods for the trees. "In my own passion for CAD/CAM/GIS, I neglected IT. We had just won our first large contract of

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
ROLTA STARTED OFF AS A STEEL ROLLING MILL COMPANY

Sometimes, I feel that I am a first-class labor. Working and slogging morning to night. I still work 70-80 hours a week. But, I feel fulfilled and satisfied, and that's all that matters.

\$30 million for doing the complete digital mapping of Saudi Arabia. At that time, GE approached us, and I didn't give it the kind of attention that I should have," Singh sighs.

Rohta hastily entered IT setting up an internet service provider business in Mumbai, but it lagged behind the competition for years. "Even by 2005, my IT revenue was not even 10% of what our other revenues were. We were too late."

A major transformation came in early 2000 period when Rohta decided to change from a software service provider to an engineering and procurement or EPC firm. By 2005, Rohta was designing end-to-end large petrochemical plants in strategic joint venture with big names like Shaw. Singh also engineered the company's expansion in the defense sector, by providing state-of-the-art GIS based C4 ISR systems to the Indian Army. And then, between 2008 and 2015, Rohta decided to fully transform its business from a service-centric model to an IP-led model.

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
**ROHTA WAS THE FIRST COMPANY TO INTRODUCE CAD/CAM/GIS IN INDIA**



With Bentley Systems  
 CEO Greg Bentley



With Hexagon CEO  
 Ola Rollen



With Trimble CEO  
 Steve Berglund

But, this business transformations had come with a lot of pain points. "The only way was to acquire a lot of companies worldwide. For that I needed lot of investment. In the process, we spent over a billion dollars. Our market capitalization went down. From 'no debt', we became 'high debt!'"

The sacrifice proved worthwhile as the company started getting well recognized for in-house developed IP-led Geospatial, Engineering and IT solutions worldwide. Rohta also leaped forward in the field of Digital IT Products including Big Data Analytics and Defence. And now, Rohta is playing a substantial part in what he calls the fourth industrial revolution

Over a span of 40 years, Singh has made Rohta a global name. And his secret is nothing but hard work. "In my mind, I would never retire," he says. "Sometimes, I feel that I am a first-class labor. Working and slogging morning to night. I still work 70-80 hours a week. But, I feel satisfied." And that's all that matters. ☺