

Achates to make inroads in CV segment

■ **Abhishek Parekh**
Mumbai

Achates Power, the US-based engine manufacturer, which has refined the opposed-piston engine technology, is looking to penetrate the commercial vehicle segment as the segment provides much better showcase for the effectiveness of the company's value proposition as compared to the passenger vehicle segment.

"Since a typical truck is consuming a lot of fuel and constantly on the move, the value proposition that we offer is even more compelling for the CV segment," President and Chief Executive Officer, Achates Power, David Johnson. Executing customers' programmes to meet their specifications and requirements remains a key priority for the company. A typical heavy duty truck in the US, for instance, covers nearly 120,000 miles in a year and consumes more than 20,000 gallons of fuel in the process. "I do expect our first production-ready diesel engines to be in the CV segment as we offer a very compelling value proposition for that segment," he added. The company's technology could potentially save around \$12,000 per annum in the above circumstances.

More pertinently, said Johnson, most measures for improving efficiency of existing diesel engine technology, can also be applied to 'opposed piston' diesel engines. The company is looking to leapfrog in its evolution path by offering a superior diesel engine technology with scope of improving it through various measures.

The company has been working with a number of customers for initial stage prototypes and approvals. "We are currently at a very critical juncture in our existence as we are looking to have several operational projects with customers and are between prototyping and the final approval stage," said Johnson. He added that most of the prospective customers are keen on knowing the fundamental benefits of the engine, ability to meet emission norms and scope of improvement in performance among other issues. Changing an existing platform or an engine in a vehicle is a major decision for any automobile company, especially when the engine has been a proven success and achieved its objective, he added.

An engine manufacturer's ability to manufacture reliable and powerful engines has improved substantially over the past decade. It has taken around three to four years for Achates to achieve the desired performance level from the engine as opposed to around five to six years that may have been consumed around a decade ago.

"Over the last 12 months or so, we have been able to improve fuel efficiency and performance of our engines from 13 percent to around 20 percent," said Johnson.

The company is looking to offer its internal combustion engine for a hybrid platform of vehicle manufacturer to be mated with an electric powertrain. Such a platform could offer a better value proposition compared to the existing gasoline/



David Johnson, President & CEO, Achates Power

electric choices available in the market. "In my view, the benefit of having a hybrid system from

a customers' perspective primarily comes from stop-start driving cycle as opposed to driving non-stop for hundreds of kilometres. In such stop/start driving conditions, a diesel/electric hybrid, with our engine, can be a much better solution that currently available petrol/electric set up. We are still in process of collecting data on exactly how efficient our solution could prove in actual conditions as opposed to currently available systems," elaborated Johnson.

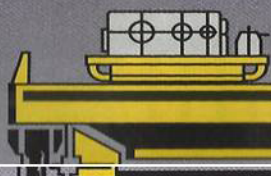
The company is looking to offer cost effective solutions for

We are currently at a very critical juncture in our existence as we are looking to have several operational projects with customers and are between prototyping and the final approval stage. We are continuing to improve our existing engine performance alongside

three and four cylinder diesel engines with two cylinder ones. "We are looking at certain market segments in India like medium or small commercial vehicles for offering our technology. It would be difficult for us to, say, offer better or more cost effective solution in a single cylinder engine used in auto rickshaw but we are still evaluating what best could be offered under such circumstances," said Johnson.

Founded in 2004 by serial entrepreneur and physicist - Dr James Lemke, who has 90 patents, and the late John Walton—with the mission to build fundamentally better engines, the company has more than 50 in-house engineers and scientists with proven technical know-how and industry expertise, coupled with testing capabilities, simulation and analysis tools.

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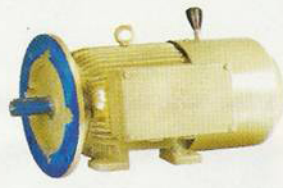
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