

# TECH | PEOPLE: Q&A with Siegfried Lokotsch | Jendamar India Chairman



Sayali Mahajan, Jendamar India's head of Marketing **(SM):**  
**When did you start working and what was your first job?**

Siegfried Lokotsch **(SL):** I had my first formal job at age 24, doing my articles at Deloitte in 2000. I also worked as a beach lifeguard during my vacation.

**SM: Did you always want to work in Finance or were you doing something else and chose to switch because you were good with numbers?**

SL: I started studying Law and graduated with a Bachelors in Commerce/Law. I thought I was interested in Law but in the first year after graduating I realised that it is basically selling time – and we only have 24 hours in a day. Also, I didn't like the whole process with the Courts. Then I changed courses, which still allowed me to study Law but I could also be Chartered Accountant. After undergrad, I did my honours degree in Accounting which was more business-oriented. I never wanted to be an accountant, and always knew I wanted to get into business.



**SM: Did you have a family business?**

SL: My father started his career in the automotive industry at General Tyre in Port Elizabeth (now Gqeberha). He then got a job at Nissan and moved to Pretoria. He met my mother in 1970 and they got married. I was born in 1975. In 1986, he was still working in supply chain management at Nissan. His job was to get the CKD parts from Japan to assemble in South Africa. Nothing was manufactured locally. His best friend owned a business transporting cars from the manufacturer to the dealer. There are two ways of doing that: 1. You can send it on a truck. 2. You can drive the car to the dealer if it's not too far. The friend met with an accident, so his wife approached my dad and asked if he would like to handle the business, as he had a lot of automotive experience. So he became a business owner when I was 11 and he ran the company until he retired in 2000. I am not involved in a family business but I got the idea of having my own business from him.



**SM: What were your thoughts when you first visited India?**

SL: My first experience of India was in 2013. We had gotten an order from Volkswagen for an engine line in which 20% of the order had to go to a local vendor, so I was coming to find a way of doing that. I remember flying to Mumbai and, going through the immigration process, I got a very good feeling about the country. I really loved the aura of the place. I can't explain in words how I felt. I then had fly to Pune – the airport was quite small and the flight was 15 to 20 minutes. When I came out of the airport, I remember seeing a lot of cars and people! It was an overwhelming experience. I had never been in so much traffic before. But I had a very positive feeling, which hasn't changed to this day. I still remember the date – it was 13 September 2013.





**SM: Have you ever had a chance to travel around in India aside from work?**

SL: Absolutely! I have been to Goa with my wife, which we enjoyed very much, and we have visited Delhi and Mumbai. India is a great place for a holiday. You can stay at a very good hotel with the best service at a much lower price. Indians are brilliant at hospitality. The best thing about the country is the food and the people. You see the extremes – there are wealthy people and there are poor people living next to them in slums. In spite of this, the energy and positivity is amazing. It really resonates with me because many have so little, yet still want to do something on their own and not wait till the money comes in.

I want to bring my kids here for them to understand how privileged they are and to experience the culture. I love it. My wife likes the shopping because you can find designer brands at the mall at much cheaper prices. I have never felt like an outsider in India and most people speak English, so it's easy to communicate.





**SM: From a business perspective, how much has your opinion changed from 2013 to now?**

SL: My opinion has not changed at all. The minute I landed here, I saw a huge opportunity in India. When I went back to South Africa and spoke to Quinton, Yanesh and Graeme, I told them I believe India is where China was 20 years ago. I've had a really good feeling about the business from the beginning. I have had good business experiences in India, unlike a lot of foreigners. I have never felt like a foreigner; I felt like I was a part of the community. After my last visit in November, you guys proved that what I believed was right and you can do the business. Honestly, I was a bit sceptical in the beginning but always knew that you are capable of it. I mean, look at the canning lines you have built and how quickly you have learned! Some of the things you make are even better than ours. Look at the Electric Vehicle business, you guys are leading it without any of our input. You made it on your own. Himanshu came up with the idea and he drove it.





**SM: Now that we have spoken about all the good things, what are the 3 improvement points for Jendemark India, according to you?**

SL: I think to hire more women. But apart from that, off the top of my head, I can't think of anything. The thing I was most critical of was not taking the initiative and making things work without South Africa or anyone saying, "You must do this, you must do that."

Himanshu has managed to galvanise you as a team and get you all to believe, to the point where I can see that you are driving us in South Africa in certain things.

Also nodding in front of customers when we are not wrong. We should be able to stand up and let the customer know if we are not at fault. No-one is perfect, no business is perfect. You have to be open to changes and adopt new things.







**SM: Where do you see Jendamarck going in the next 5 years – in India and groupwise?**

SL: I think the Indian business will become our main automation hub, with the expansion allowing us to build and export anywhere in the world. You have the people and the tech, and your cost base is low. But, before we get to the rest of the world, I want to focus on India. I want to become the best automation company in India with the best technology in the manufacturing sector.

If I go back to 2013, before we had even started here, I told the South African directors that, if we do it right, the Indian business would be double our existing business. In the next 5 years, I feel it is definitely possible. There is still a lot of scope in automation with the technology that we have in the ODIN Manufacturing ecosystem. Groupwise, I feel we can become one of the leading companies globally in technology and innovation in the manufacturing space. Establishing our ODIN ecosystem allows us to have our dream app store for our own factories and all others.

**SM: Do you think we Indians need to change our approach, our mindset, or our way of communication while interacting with not only South Africans but also people around the world?**

SL: You should be the way you are! Embrace your culture; do your job how you do your job. South Africans are South Africans, and Chinese are Chinese, but that does not change anything. You respect each other regardless of where you come from. I think what I have managed to get across is that everybody in the company is the same, we are all part of one team. Like I always say, "There is no them, there is only us!"

After my visit in November, I was blown away. I told my senior management that they all need to visit India to see and learn, and understand from Himanshu how he did it. In my own career, I have always identified and learned from the people who were successful in whatever they were doing.







**SM: How would you describe Jendamark's global corporate culture?**

SL: Our corporate culture is about driven, dynamic personalities. #IAmJendamark – it does not matter whether you are Indian, German, or South African. I want to empower everyone and trust every effort my employees are making. Believe in yourself. For me it is about the team. If my team asks me to do something, I will give my all to make it happen because I wouldn't want to let you down. If I commit to something, I promise you it's happening, whether it's you, our customer, my suppliers, or anyone..