Since its establishment in 1986, Aksh Optifibre Limited has been playing a key role in driving the growth of the fibre-to-the-home (FTTH) market. The company started manufacturing optic fibre and optic fibre cable (OFC) in 1994 and since then has emerged as a key player in the FTTH segment.

Aksh serves various industry verticals and its client base in India includes Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) and other government sectors such as defence and the railways. Over the years, the company has expanded its footprint overseas and currently exports its products to the US, South America, Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

At present, exports account for 70 per cent of the company's total revenues. Aksh is one of the leading suppliers of optic fibre and fibre reinforced plastic (FRP) rods and exports these products to over 56 countries across the world. This helped the company increase its revenues from Rs 1.888 billion in 2011-12 to Rs 2.392 billion in 2012-13. Further, the company's profit before tax went up from Rs 0.117 billion to Rs 0.259 billion.

Aksh's success over the last few years has been primarily due to the growing opportunities in the FTTH space. According to the company's managing director, Chetan Choudhari, new-age communication and the demand for high speed internet are responsible for driving the adoption of FTTH services. "It offers higher bandwidth and faster connectivity speeds, which are essential for triple-play services – video, data and telephony."

The company launched its first FTTH project in Jaipur in 2010 in collaboration with BSNL and MTNL. Subsequently, it implemented FTTH projects for the two operators in Delhi, Mumbai, Faridabad and Gurgaon. The two companies are offering internet services at 100 Mbps using Aksh's FTTH network. Building on its initial success in the FTTH market, Aksh is now exploring new business opportunities by developing products for companies on a long- and short-term basis.

Going forward, the company is expected to play a key role in the expansion of the FTTH market with an increasing demand for high speed delivery of multimedia applications in areas such as video and photo sharing, telemedicine, telecommuting, distance learning and video monitoring. Moreover, the uptake of bandwidth-intensive applications is on the rise and Aksh is looking to gain a majority share in this market. In 2014, the company's operations in the OFC space received a major fillip when it won a Rs 2 billion contract from the government for supplying

cables for the National Optical Fibre Network project. The company is also planning to complete two global FTTH projects. For example, Aksh is providing FTTH-based triple-play equipment to Bharat Telecom Limited, a leading operator in Mauritius. The company has already installed 1,500 km of OFC to deliver FTTH services to 2,500 customers. Further, it will deploy 2,600 km of all dielectric self-supporting OFC for Bhutan Power Corporation Limited.

In a market characterised by the presence of large companies such as Sterlite Technologies, Radius Infratel, Tulip Telecom and Birla Furukawa Fibre Optics Limited, Aksh has managed to make significant inroads in the Indian and overseas OFC market. With regard to Aksh's competitive edge over other players, Choudhari says, "The company manufactures all production machinery in-house, thereby bringing down the overall manufacturing cost. Further, Aksh – being an integrated manufacturer of OFC and FRP rods – is one of the largest consumers of FRP rods and can maintain strict delivery timelines due to the reduced turnaround time of procuring raw materials."

Besides focusing on the FTTH market, the company is also optimistic about making a strong impact in the IPTV market. Currently, it is offering IPTV services under the brand name iControl, in partnership with BSNL and MTNL, across 20 cities in the country. In addition, Aksh is providing PigeonVoIP, a VoIP service that enables subscribers to make voice calls to over 100 countries including the US, the UK and Australia.

The company has chalked out a road map for its future growth. It plans to augment its OFC manufacturing capacity by 25 per cent. Further, it has lined up new OFC product launches for the FTTH, windmill, solar, oil and gas, and defence industries. The company is also focusing on expanding its global presence by exporting products to 60 countries by end-2014 against 46 countries at present. With a strong manufacturing base and a focus on international markets, Aksh is well positioned to expand its operations over the next few years.

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