

# EXECUTIVE VIEW



## **Renu Misra**

**Managing Director  
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**EXECUTIVE ACCESS**  
INDIA'S LEADING GLOBAL SEARCH FIRM

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Renu Misra is Managing Director of Grohe India Private Limited and Director at Lixil India Private Limited, both a part of Lixil group headquartered in Japan.

Renu pursued her MBA from FORE School of Management, New Delhi and her graduation from Sri Venkateswara College, Delhi University. She is a Business Strategist with over 20 years of experience across a gamut of industries including Building Materials, FMCG, Office automation, IT & Telecom.

She possesses extensive exposure to business leadership & strategy with demonstrated competence in business growth & management along with people development.

She has proven experience of over two decades in setting up business operations, managing P & L responsibility and driving strategic initiatives leading to top line growth as well as bottom line improvement. In the past seven years GROHE has surged ahead towards its goal of achieving leadership in the Industry under her able stewardship.

Renu actively pursues her interests of travel and reading while being a professional and a mother. Numerous achievements & an outstanding leadership style has won her the World Women Leadership Achievement Award 2016, 50 Most Impactful Leaders in Water & Water Management and Women Super Achiever Award at 4<sup>th</sup> World Women Leadership Congress and Awards.

*As one of the few women who occupy corner offices in large multinationals how has your journey been? As a finance head moving into an MD's role, what did you do differently and what worked in your favor?*

I can say that I have been very experimental with my choices of roles and industries right from the beginning of my career. I moved from IT and Telecom to Office Automation to FMCG and from there to Building materials industry in the past two decades.

I have always held a firm view that I needed to keep broadening my horizon, and was never shy to pick up roles different from my functional expertise on the way. Fortunately, I gained exposure to multiple functions like HR, Administration, CRM & Customer Services tools, logistics & supply chain management very early in my career which has added tremendous value to my current role. I also led an initiative for outsourcing financial transactions to a large BPO. Besides Finance, Accounting, Audit, Planning, MIS and Taxation, I invested my time in all related fields of business over the period which has helped me develop a holistic view of business.

*Do you feel that women need to have a different leadership style than men? Why is it that not a lot of women are in leadership positions in India yet?*

Leadership style is individual and not gender based in my view. Women do bring different styles on the table and organizations have started recognizing and appreciating this. Moreover, women in leadership roles is no longer an alien concept now and there are numerous successful examples as well. Having said that, I do feel that there is potential for more women to take up leadership roles, which requires recognition of talent, mentoring them and an overall shift in mindsets to be inclusive and promote diversity in organizations.

*Since the time you took over as Managing Director, what have been some of your most critical challenges at work and how did you deal with them? Being one of the few women in a circle of leaders that is predominantly male dominated, how do you manage to hold your own?*

The challenge always is to make the right kind of choices. The choices you make for business and people define your future. It is a constant factor and as leaders we have to define the correct priorities that grow our business while taking the team along the path of growth and success.

I would also like to add that the industry has been very receptive to me and I have been able to cover the length and breadth of the country meeting customers and partners with a positive outlook and business progression plans. With growing connect and insights from the market, making choices as a leader also becomes easier.

***From a macro perspective, how do you see the bathroom and sanitary ware industry in India evolving over the next 5 years? What are you doing to stay ahead of the competition?***

Today, aspirations and progressive lifestyles define a person or a family, which reflects in how one maintains his/her surroundings. An important factor that has moved a step ahead in defining a person's lifestyle is his/her cognizance towards hygiene combined with luxury which goes beyond the living room. The bathroom has increasingly become an intrinsic element of luxury living and as consumers in India become more exposed to the highest levels of luxury along with increasing disposable income, they are looking for products that blend functionality, sustainability, comfort and hygiene with exceptional aesthetics.

Touchless controls, digital, intuitive operations and water-saving technology are some of the areas which are witnessing immense traction. These pivotal points are being seen as an investment towards one's personal well-being as they help transform the daily routine into a sensational experience.

All our products are a reflection of our passion for quality, technology, design and sustainability. Each offering in our portfolio is a veritable manifestation of our commitment to creating exceptional bathing experience. We set our standards extremely high to ensure that every time a user enters a bathroom fitted with GROHE fittings, it's a true sensory treat for



them with promise of health and hygiene. Therefore, any product, be it our GROHE Rainshower® system or American Standard Acacia E, each of them promises an encounter with the highest echelons of relaxation, rejuvenation and refinement.

***What kind of innovation are you looking to bring in the sanitary ware market? From a product stand point, GROHE is catering to different segments of the market now, has the Indian audience warmed up to the idea of spending more for luxury in this segment?***

GROHE has always witnessed a huge demand for sophisticated and technologically-advanced kitchen and bathroom faucets as these special spaces are considered to be an extension and reflection of the homeowner's personality. Futuristic and easy-to-install fittings are being embraced with alacrity in Indian homes. As I mentioned, bathrooms are also increasingly becoming an intrinsic element of luxury living with consumers looking for products that blend functionality, sustainability, comfort and hygiene with exceptional aesthetics. GROHE also specializes in tailor-made spa concepts which is a unique offering in the Industry.

Some of the latest additions made by GROHE include the GROHE Eurodisc Joystick. The super-slim, wall-mounted washbasin mixer offers smooth and long-lasting fingertip control. The sleek finish and award-winning design of the product makes it the perfect amalgamation of form and function.

The GROHE SmartControl push button technology takes the idea of comfortable showering to a new level. The newly designed push button integrates both the on-off function and volume control. The push button has an intuitive symbol for the head shower spray pattern or the hand spray, whichever the user prefers. Our Eurosmart NEW faucet features a solid metal handle and forward-leaning dynamics which is a perfect mix of smart looks, technology and price. Similarly, the GROHE Essence New represents clean, simple and visually pleasing designs. It features all the leading GROHE innovations.

***Has the slowdown in the realty space impacted business for GROHE and American Standard in India? What do you do to offset a demand slowdown?***

Any macro economic change does take same time to settle and India as a country is getting into newer consumption phase.

New project launches have got stretched as the informal sources of capital are not available. There was a temporary slowdown witnessed in the 'aspirational' buying tendencies of consumers. However, the situation is getting back to normal and there is likely to be greater transparency in the market which will be beneficial for all stakeholders in the long run. Hence there will not be any significant effect to the business on a larger scale as we are certain that a positive sentiment will pervade the business environment and India will maintain its growth trajectory.



***How have things changed for you after the acquisition by Lixil Group? What are the synergies that you are hoping to tap into and create an impact in the Indian market?***

Post the acquisition by Lixil Group, GROHE has been able to enhance the edge it already enjoyed in its segment. Our products have become far more enriched and improved both visually and in terms of utility, thanks to German design and technology coupled with Japanese innovation. This has helped the brand to further consolidate its unparalleled market leadership. Currently, we are present in more than 120 cities as Lixil Water Technology with various brand and products offerings. Also riding on individual strengths of each brand, Grohe and American Standard, our portfolio proposition from Lixil is far more enriched and a consumer now has one of the largest portfolio to choose from.

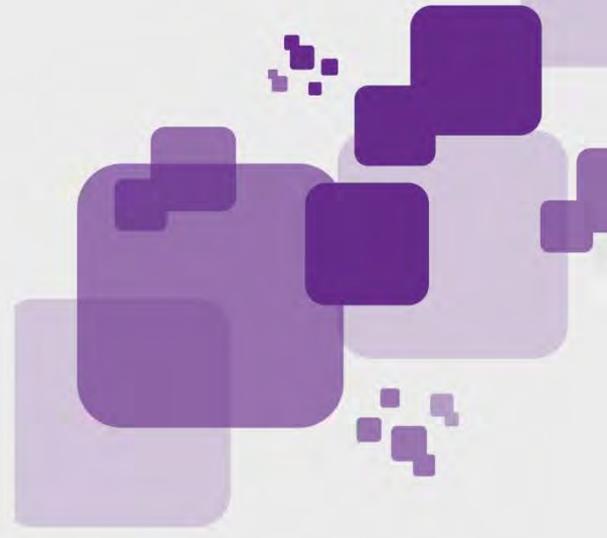
***How critical is India to Lixil's global ambitions? With the government aggressively pushing for "Make in India", do you view India as a potential manufacturing hub for your global operations? What do you think needs to be done to make India more favorable for businesses like yours?***

India is the growth engine in any industry across the globe and in our case also, there is no exception to this. The huge burgeoning consumer base and upwardly mobile consumer today has put India as one of the focus countries in Lixil.



The Indian government's movement of Clean India and Sanitation for all has further fuelled the commitment towards India by Lixil Corporation. As for manufacturing in India, we would be making announcements at the right time, if and when that happens. Right now, we are a fully imported brand and are focused on bringing world class solutions to discerning Indian consumer.

However, favorable free trade policies will augur well to bring much more advanced innovations, with affordable luxury positioning to Indian consumer.



***Bathroom and sanitary ware is a highly unorganized market with only a few well-known names. How difficult is it to create a brand in a highly unorganized market and educate customers? How different is the positioning for GROHE and American Standard in India?***

GROHE is India's No. 1 International fittings brand and we operate in the luxury lifestyle market. American Standard, a 140 year old American brand, is bringing complete bath solutions to the Indian consumer in mid and luxury segments. While the market is largely fragmented and has limited known brands, in case of Lixil Water Technology, we stand for quality, service and latest in design and innovation. Today, we are synonymous with quality and service and are best in the class.

It is rather challenging to build a brand in any unorganized and segmented market, unless you are known for meeting consumer demands as well as poised for defining their untapped demands. We make conscious efforts towards that and a large part of our brand building goes in educating not only consumers but the channel and influencers alike. It is this well defined and well structured approach that has put us at the forefront of the industry as true leaders.

***In your opinion, in what ways has leadership changed globally and what according to you are the qualities that will define successful leaders in the coming future?***

In the backdrop of the rapidly changing world order, modern business leaders have to stand up to increasing levels of challenges. In my view, the most important qualities that define any leader are:



- Adaptability
- Ability to inspire change and innovate
- Ability to continue to stand firm on commitment to the community

### *What do you personally look for in an individual when hiring for key positions?*

I believe that it is important for people to have a right balance of culture and capability .

At Lixil, we are driven by our values of – Work with Respect, Embrace Quality, Deliver on Commitment, Inspire Passion and Pursue Growth. Cultural fitment along with the ability to create opportunities to grow the Lixil brand are the key ingredients that we look for in an individual.

### *Is there is a specific focus on diversity at GROHE? How do you ensure a diverse workforce in India?*

We are conscious of bringing diversity in our talent & we do carry a mandate to bring talent from across spectrums for a different perspective into our working environment. We are appreciative of differences that exist within humanity and believe in nurturing them to create an inclusive culture.

We stand strong for our brand values of quality, technology, design and sustainability and this is not only seen in the products that we bring to market, but also our people. It is the passion and commitment of thousands of people working across the globe who constantly strive towards keeping these values high that brings about excellence in our business operations.



*How do you feel does the Search landscape need to evolve to suit the changing needs of clients? What are your expectations from a Search partner?*

We need partners who can align with our values and global perspective when recommending talent. Search partners need to evolve as business partners who can foresee the requirements and advise business on hires who can align with company objectives & growth plans in long term. Like our teams, our suppliers and search partners are partners in growth, they must be equally committed to business values so as to be successful together.

*On an informal note, how does your average day look like? What keeps you occupied when you are not at work?*

My day starts with some time with my husband over the morning tea. This is normally centered on our day ahead and the happenings around. I do ensure that I spend a few minutes to warm up with my sons as they are getting ready for school. I can surely say that seeing my family first thing in the morning energizes me for the day ahead.

In between our travel, my husband and I try to follow a health and exercise routine consciously for overall well being.

My day at work revolves around moving from one meeting / call to another, like for most professionals. If I am not at work, then I am spending time with my children on a sport or in reading.

We love to explore new cuisine and destinations, and as a family we try to make the most of our time together in pursuing common passions. These simple pleasures along with my work are the driving force in my life.



# ABOUT EXECUTIVE ACCESS

Executive Access India was setup in 1995 and is today one of the most prominent global executive search firms in India. We cover 9 industry practices and have till date executed more than 2100 search mandates at leadership levels. Our client list is a healthy mix of Fortune 500 companies as well as most respected Indian corporates. Although a firm with global capability and coverage we are still boutique at heart because we understand the need to be nimble and innovative.

Our core strength is undoubtedly our knowledge base and a team of efficient and experienced consultants with in-depth understanding of their chosen sectors. We are the pioneers of the “Accountability Clause” in the Indian retained search and have always striven to align our business model.

## Our services include the following

- Executive Search
- Leadership and Board Consulting
- Executive Intelligence
- Capital Introduction Services

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