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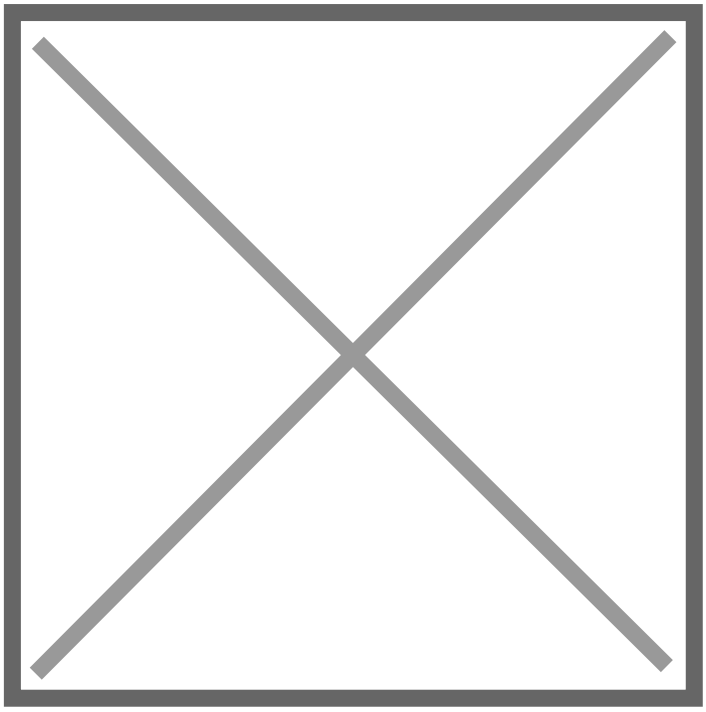
"We serve the needs of scienceÃ¢â?¬â??based businesses"- Lisette Mermod-Cox, managing director, BDKT

08 April 2005 | News



What is the vision and mandate of the BDKT Consortium?

The BDKT (Business Development and Knowledge Transfer) Consortium for Life Sciences Facilities was created to serve the needs of scienceÃ¢â?¬â??based businesses. It is supported by the UK department of trade and industry to facilitate the export of British expertise in the area of pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and healthcare. It comprises 15 different British companies, all of which are established players in the UK.

Today all the emerging life sciences markets are facing the trend of: maturation of the western market; change as a result of globalization; and employment of individuals through education. We bring in the western pharma experience to companies and countries looking at developing their own R&D expertise.

BDKT facilitates the opportunity to export some of this knowledge and know-how to the emerging markets. In fact, we are looking to create a BDKT network in India to help transfer the know-how to the Indian market. Our Consortium has 15 different disciplines, which effectively makes us a one phone call resource for any company depending on whether they are start-up or a mature business looking to re-engineer.

Does BDKT provide opportunities for Indian entrepreneurs as well?

Absolutely. At the moment we are in touch with a very large Indian law firm to help correlate the two major biotech associations in India, ABLE and AIBA, in order to bring them in contact with the British biotech sector. There is an organizational need for trade associations to be more concise, to be able to provide presentation material on their member companies. We are going to massage the relationship to enable them to make a channel relationship with the biotech companies in the UK.

We also help the Indian entrepreneurs more directly by offering a virtual incubator service. It is a program where a science partner can offer help to review business plans, help in building an international management team as necessary, help thinking about the globalization of the business and global marketing. Usually, it is a package that we offer to the science partner, and they in turn may offer it to the individual member companies. But if a company approaches us, we can also offer it directly to them.

What are the biggest hurdles facing the Asian and Indian markets?

I think that all emerging markets share the same problems. Business practice is one of the biggest challenges for any country that is inward looking and relatively closed for a long period of its growth time. Some of the communist countries, which have become members of the EU face similar problems. Effective globalization is putting pressure on Indian companies to adapt to an appropriate international business culture. This will directly affect the ability to engage contract, to exchange people, cross training programs.

What do you perceive as India's biggest strength in this area?
People and their quality. That is the only thing which matters. As the life sciences, health care and pharmaceutical sector constitute the knowledge economy. During the last 20 years, India has put more efforts in the education of innovators than any other economy on this planet.

Many people may say that India has a cost advantage, but it is in the short term. The cost in India will go up like everywhere else. The costs have gone up in Poland, they have gone up in Hungary. It may not be as quickly but they will go up.

How does India compare with China in this segment?
Both India and China have tremendous challenges at the national government level to increase R&D and to be players in the knowledge economy globally. India has a tremendous advantage over China in its educated workforce. China has a lot to catch up. If you look at the numbers in India then in the area of R&D, right now the advantage is in India.

The challenge for India when it comes to enterprise is that while the Indian economy is liberalizing, it is perceived that there is a greater distance between the Indian government and big business investing in India. In China, there is a perception that you can get to a decision-maker in the government very quickly, more directly and with an anticipation of a positive response. n

Rolly Dureha