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06 September 2005 | News



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Sanjeev Dhar, country manager, Agilent India

Agilent India is focusing on the entire life science value chain with backward and forward integration with cutting edge technologies. In an interview, Sanjeev Dhar speaks about the forthcoming plans of the company in India. Excerpts:

How is Agilent LSCA planning to consolidate and expand its presence in the life science market in India?

Agilent has major strengths in the area of life sciences. Our chromatographic solutions already have the market leadership in the pharma and biotechnology industry. The company is now focusing on the entire life science value chain with backward and forward integration with cutting edge technologies. These include Lab-on-chip, microfluidics, the recently introduced HPLC-on-chip, and bioinformatics. Customers in India benefit from the innovative solutions as they can carry out high quality scientific work within the country. We launched Gene Expression products in India in March this year. These have received tremendous response and we have a focused approach in expanding our gene expression and proteomics portfolio business.

What is your long-term vision for the company?

In the next three years we would like to see Agilent as the most admired vendor of life science solutions in the areas we deal

with. With our cutting edge solutions and customer-centric approach, we are well-positioned to leave competition far behind. We would also make sure that we continue to be the best place to work for our employees.

Significantly, Agilent is the only company with life science and chemical analysis business, which has won many awards as "Best Employer in India" and has been consistently figuring among the top 25 companies. We are making appropriate investments in our infrastructure to meet our market growth and employee satisfaction goals.

How is Agilent's DNA microarray being received by the Indian life sciences industry? What are the products in the pipeline?

We've got a very encouraging response from customers and we are currently working on many active leads. We launched the DNA microarray in March this year and it has been only five months. In this short period we have reached many of the target labs and are working closely with the scientists to provide total solutions.

In the future one can expect enhancement of array products and products in the areas of microfluidics from Agilent. On the proteomics front also there are opportunities to enhance our mass spectrometry portfolio to cater to life science customers.

How do you see life sciences solution companies evolving in the future?

Currently we see most solution providers being able to "sell" their solutions. However, moving forward, only companies with total commitment to the life sciences area will be successful. The major reason is that life science solutions are at the extreme end of scientific discoveries and new frontiers. To successfully deploy these solutions, one needs world-class infrastructure. Returns on investment may not be immediate. So solution providers need to have substance to sustain.

How would you compare Agilent LSCA India operations with that in other countries?

In terms of growth, Agilent India is one of the fourth largest growing business entities in the Asia Pacific. We continue to show a high double-digit growth in last three quarters of our fiscal year and have been gaining high market share rapidly.

Agilent India is perhaps the only subsidiary company, which is truly set up as a global company. We have the same infrastructure, systems and processes that our other entities use in the US and Europe. For instance, Agilent confirms to the Sox (Sarbens-Oxly law) in its business practices and we follow the same in India although it is not mandatory as per the Indian law. Most importantly we behave and act like a global company. We use the latest IT support in our operations, continuously measure customer satisfaction and take corrective steps wherever required. We use the latest practices in HR management and lay emphasis on leadership development.

What have been some of the key achievements of the company during the recent times?

Customer satisfaction has been at the core of our growth initiatives. To achieve our customer goals, we have deployed innovative customer service delivery process which provides ease of call logging and fast turn-around time in problem solving. To that end, Agilent is the only analytical instrument vendor to offer end-to-end service delivery process. This process is extremely successful and is our major differentiator.

We have also grown our market share aggressively against our nearest competitors in the last nine months. Agilent has won major deals at top pharma and non pharma accounts. We now have many customers with \$1 m-\$2 m annual purchase budgets and it is growing. We have also been successful in growing our mass spectroscopy product portfolio for both GC and HPLC product lines.

Rolly Dureha