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Mankind Pharma ensuring complete digital experience in partnership with Agilent

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New Delhi-based Mankind Pharma has deployed Agilent digital lab solutions to accelerate the digital transformation of their laboratories, which resulted in increased lab efficiency and productivity. Mankind was following excel based calculations to derive results, but using OpenLab Intelligence reporting, they were able to get all calculations done within OpenLab.



In conversation with Samir Vyas (R), India Country General Manager, Agilent Technologies and Rahul Dev (L), Head & VP Analytical Research, Mankind Pharma

Edited excerpts-

How was the 'digital transformation' business at Agilent India in 2021?

Samir Vyas- Agilent has had a remarkable year in 2021, not just in terms of overall business performance, but also in terms of digital transformation. Our laboratory informatics solutions, such as chromatography data systems and data management, have seen consistent growth, allowing customers to take advantage of Agilent's new generation of informatics solutions. Our customers have consistently requested that we integrate their existing software systems; this is where OpenLab Sample Scheduler came into play, enabling our customers to have a bidirectional LIMS and OpenLab CDS integration for a fully digital experience. Agilent SLIMS & LIMS+ELN solutions were added to our portfolio, providing customers with comprehensive end-to-end solutions from Agilent.

How do you foresee the growth & challenges of 'lab automation' in the pharma industry in India in 2022 & beyond?

Samir Vyas- The laboratory informatics market in India is expected to expand at an 11-12 percent CAGR over the next few years. The increasing need for laboratory digitization, the need for integrated lab informatics solutions, and the increasing demand to comply with regulatory requirements are driving the growth. The pandemic has also highlighted the importance of going digital, as there is a need to reduce lab footprints and allow users to work remotely. Every lab needs to get the most out of its resources while keeping operational costs low without compromising the quality of work produced. This is where lab automation comes in, providing maximum productivity and reducing rework.

Laboratory operations are extremely complex and heterogeneous because they are frequently managed using a variety of tools. No two labs operate in the same way, and it takes time to translate the complexity of a problem into an electronic or digital solution. The laboratories' replacements could be a variety of digital systems, which are becoming more reliant on greater integration. Integrating these systems has proven to be one of the most time-consuming and frustrating tasks. Agilent is well-known for its robust analytical instruments, and with the addition of easily integrated systems such as Agilent SLIMS, CDS, and ECM, our customers can obtain an end-to-end solution for their lab automation requirements. We have worked on providing solutions that can synchronously “talk” to each other enabling users to have a complete digital experience.

Is the concept of lab automation more popular in the industry or academia sector in India?

Samir Vyas- The goal of lab automation is to increase productivity while simultaneously lowering operating costs. Even though the concept of lab automation is arguably more applicable within commercial industries, many academia labs would also benefit from automation in order to further advance and investigate new research concepts whilst educating students using the latest technologies.

Tell us about your partnership with Mankind Pharma.

Samir Vyas- Agilent’s partnership with Mankind has been very unique where we supply our analytical instruments for their R&D and QC facilities. With the inclusion of Agilent informatics solutions at Mankind, we are collaborating together on how Agilent can be a part of Mankind’s success in achieving their goal of digitization.

Turning to Rahul Dev, tell us about your partnership with Agilent.

Rahul Dev- Agilent has provided us with cutting-edge analytical instruments. We also purchased Agilent software, such as the OpenLab CDS server, and began performing auto calculations on it. OpenLab CDS auto calculations improved operational efficiency because no data had to be manually transcribed to excel, saving analyst and reviewer time, and ensuring a significant reduction in errors associated with manual transcriptions. We are also excited to take advantage of the

readily available bidirectional integration of OpenLab CDS and SLIMS, which provides a complete solution from sample management to results transfer from LIMS to OpenLab CDS and vice versa, ensuring a complete digital experience.

How well equipped are you to adapt to lab automation/digital transformation for the pharma business?

Rahul Dev- Mankind is well positioned and equipped for the digital transformation journey because we have very well-defined procedures, and the next step is to automate as many of our processes as possible. We've invested in analytical tools and software systems to speed up the digital transformation process.

Which activities would be directed under lab automation?

Rahul Dev- Digital transformation is not something that can be accomplished overnight. It is a continuous process of identifying and resolving limiting steps in your process. For example, instead of using Excel spreadsheets, why not perform your calculations within the instrument control software. We began by using auto calculations in OpenLab CDS, which eliminated the need for data to be manually transcribed to excel. The next logical step would be to use LIMS to digitize the sample management process and integrate LIMS with our existing CDS systems to eliminate all manual transcription work. Finally, because data and knowledge are byproducts of all digital systems, consolidating data from disparate sources and storing it for the long term is a critical step in the digital transformation process.

Would you be hiring skilled labor or conducting training programs for the same?

Rahul Dev- The lab workforce or end users are the focal point of any digital transformation process. Any digital system should be intuitive and simple to use so that lab users can use it with ease and with minimal training. It should simplify lab users' daily lives and reduce repetitive tasks, allowing them to focus on science rather than processes. We are holding regular training sessions for our employees on new platforms so that they can complete their tasks quickly and thus improve productivity. Also, hiring is a continuous process, and we are looking for skilled labor with the ability to work in a digital environment and contribute to the achievement of company goals.

How much investment would be required to embed lab automation within the pharma business?

Rahul Dev- Although it needs some amount of investment in terms of both time and money for the lab automation process, the return on investment is visible in terms of productivity, reduced compliance risk and overall benefit to the organization.

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