

"We believe in sharing the success with our distributors"

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Wataru Tajima, deputy managing director, Shimadzu Analytical (India)

Shimadzu Analytical India Pvt Ltd, a group company of Shimadzu Corporation, Japan, has been in the Indian market for the last 40 years providing solutions for quality control and to the R&D labs. Seeing an increase in demand for new and sophisticated instrumentation solutions, Shimadzu set up its customer support center in India during the first half of 2006. Wataru Tajima, deputy managing director, Shimadzu Analytical (India) Pvt Ltd, spoke to BioSpectrum about Shimadzu's plans for India. Excerpts of the interview:

What are some of the reasons for Shimadzu to step up its investments in India?

Indian companies earlier were involved in reverse engineering of the processes. But now they are following the methods of the US and European pharmacopoeia. At present, Indian companies are developing new methods and tools to cut short the drug development process. It is a slow process and takes time. Things are however changing.

Five years ago, when our customers were buying the instruments, they had to be made aware of the use of instruments. We, as instrument manufacturers', try to give them advice on how to make their research activities easier and overcome the challenges in reducing the development cycle. This is what we have in mind and are trying to do this in India. The customers will value this kind of advice.

How has Shimadzu India's business grown in the last one year?

In April 2006, we set up our customer support center. We are serious to serve the customers and the industry better and to train the new sales force that has joined our distributors. It has brought a lot of confidence among our customers and also among the sales and services team of the distributors. We grew nearly by 33 percent during the last year through our distributors. Our philosophy is doing business through distributors.

What is the differentiation that you offer to the Indian customer?

We were earlier not able to deliver to our fullest extent. So in 2006, we focused on upgradation of the skills of the younger generation. We basically helped customers to evaluate the systems, machines, or instruments. We also provided training to the people who bought our systems. By doing this, we have taken care of the training needs of the customers as well as the sales force on how to use and operate our systems.

Do you have any plans to enter the market directly in India?

We work with the distributors and we are not thinking of entering the market directly. We have been successful using the distributors approach. We are not thinking of breaking the rule and starting new things. We will give the benefit to a distributor and continue to support the distributors in the life sciences space. This is our long-term strategy to be a successful player in the life science space. We believe in sharing the success with the distributors.

Are you considering to add new distributor?

No. There are about 200 people working with the four distributors that we have who are focusing exclusively on Shimadzu products. We wish to reduce the distributors burden by providing training and updating their staff on the latest instruments and its applications. It is time consuming and investment intensive. We will try to address such issues by offering them training programs so that they can cover larger geographical areas. We continue to educate the staff of our distributors.

What are your immediate plans?

We have upgraded our laboratories and introduced seven instruments. We have already completed two batches of training in India. It is a competitive world. This year our focus will be on using our sales force (small in size) on the fields and on services side. This is for the sophisticated instruments. It does not really have a big market in India. Second, we want a change a bit and move forward. With the growing demand, we continue to do training programs on applications for the sales force of our distributors.

How do you see India as an opportunity compared to China?

India is our potential market. China definitely will saturate soon. The life sciences and the education market in China is nearing saturation point. However, the market base is very broad in China. It depends on the politics in a nation. We hope that it would stabilize soon.

Narayan Kulkarni