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Spinco chairman: Customers' confidence is our success formula

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Thyagarajan: Customers' confidence is our success formula



Spinco Biotech is celebrating its 32 years of service to the scientific community in 2013, which is quite a remarkable feat in this industry. Adding another feather in their cap is the sustained and successful 30 years relationship with Shimadzu, one of the global leaders for analytical instruments. The key factor which differentiates Spinco from its competitors is the customer confidence that they have built and the goal to continue to strive for the goodwill that the company has earned from its principals.

In a conversation with BioSpectrum, Mr S Thyagarajan, chairman, Spinco Biotech shares his thoughts about Spinco's 30 years of service and also about the latest product launches by the company.

Having completed 30 years of customer service, what new can the customers expect from Spinco?
Customer expectations have undergone a radical transformation in the past three decades, heavily influenced by the ever-changing market dynamics. Many of our key business relationships today did not exist in nineties. Moreover, the numerous mergers, acquisitions and other forms of investments at multinational company levels have added a global flavor to the customer perspectives. We are today considered consultation partners by many of our key accounts exalting us from the distributor status of yesterday.

Competing with global companies for their share, our customers expect from us an excellence in terms of service. To accord a 24x7 support and thus minimize downtime, we are also expected to organize workshops, to conduct trouble-shooting training, to help users in method development and at times to perform a technology assessment or sample analysis. Having understood this paradigm shift in customer demands, we are equipping ourselves with necessary talent and infrastructure.

What are the latest products of Spinco Biotech? Any upcoming technology in the life science segment?
Interestingly, analytical and life science instrumentation are a continually innovating process that goes with evolving new technology. These innovations take place not only in the design of instruments but pave the way for new applications hitherto not available. Some of the instruments in our portfolio today, especially in the life science segment were developed in the last ten years, thanks to the the human genome project, resulting in an exciting range of high-end instrumentation.

In chromatography, Shimadzu is constantly improvising on their instrumentation in line with the varying customer expectations. Only few years back Shimadzu had launched the UHPLC Nexera and last month Shimadzu had introduced a newer version of UHPLC Nexera X2 with iPDeA (Intelligent Peak Deconvolution Analysis), with the world's highest sensitivity, unrivaled spectrum resolution and superior stability for UHPLC/HPLC analysis. For scientists working in proteomics, Shimadzu has launched an Integrated Protein Digestion HPLC, the Perfinity iDP. In the mass spectrometry segment, Shimadzu is approaching the market with their Ultra Fast Mass Spectrometer series.

Over the years, we have supplied equipment ranging from tabletop lyophilizers to production scale instruments. However, as new pharmaceutical manufacturing facilities get established exclusively for export to countries like the US and Europe, FDA certification becomes a mandatory posing a huge challenge. This calls for totally automated systems and we have to our credit a few on-going installations of fully automated largest capacity lyophilizers from Hull.

Spinco is known for its strong relationship with global partners such as Shimadzu and SP Scientific. Tell us more about that?

We take pride in our 30 years of partnership with Shimadzu. Shimadzu's strong support and continuous encouragement are our major reasons for success in this market. In fact, many of our offices across India were inaugurated by one of the directors of Shimadzu Corporation. For instance, our supply chain management centre, that was set up to streamline consumables and spares delivery for separation science product line, was inaugurated by Dr Teruhisa Ueda, director of Shimadzu Corporation in 2008. Our 55,000 sqft customer support centre at Hyderabad, that was built in 2010 to celebrate the milestone of 10,000 Shimadzu HPLCs in India, was inaugurated by Mr Yasunori Tokumasu, another director of Shimadzu Corporation.

SP Scientific is another principal with whom we have completed two decades of partnership. At the recently held Global Partners Meet of SP Scientific, we have been awarded '2012 Channel Partner - Worldwide'. We are also proud of our sustained relationship with principals like Molecular Devices, Daicel, Foss, Kinematica and others.

Are there any plans for new partnerships, collaboration or acquisition?
Moving from a vendor perspective, we are today known as a company for bringing newer technology to the research lab that is clearly reflected in our tagline 'Bringing Technology, Enabling Science'.

While seeking newer and novel technologies that we bring to the scientific community, we follow a work flow based applications approach. In Life Science, we have recently partnered with Hamilton for sample storage and liquid handling automation and robotics to address high throughput and complex pipetting needs, facilitate controlled sample archival and retrieval. Newer technologies like digital molecular bar-coding for the study of multiplexed gene expression at a single cell level, molecular forensics for completely automated human identification, high throughput microbial screening and a platform for advanced microbial genetics are also being planned.

'LyoZone' is our customer solution centre that we are setting up with SP Scientific to support the increasing Lyo-customer base with a view to provide an opportunity to scientists not only to see the equipment, but also to run product trials and to perform cycle characterization/optimization for their specific applications. Similarly, to cope up with the increasing demand for homogenization technology in pharmaceutical, chemical and food industries, we are also planning to set up a centre of excellence for mixing and homogenizing in association with Kinematica.

Currently, MNCs are having a strong footprint in India. As an Indian player, how do you see this scenario?

Different business models work differently, but the basic goal is to meet and support customer expectations. Though globalization has brought a few subsidiaries of multinational companies to India, most of them still rely on distributors owing to the large topography that needs to be covered and also the customers preference to known contacts, valuing longer years of relationship. Ultimately, what is important is - to be close to customers and to extend support as and when they need it. Appropriately, Shimadzu has set up two full-fledged customer support centres in Mumbai and Delhi to help the distributors to offer training, demos, and sample analysis.

How did the idea to establish the Indian Institute of Chromatography and Mass Spectrometry happen?
In commemoration of our 30 glorious years of serving scientists in chromatography, we founded the Indian Institute of Chromatography and Mass Spectrometry (IICMS) in 2010. Dr Venkat Manohar, until recently the senior vice president of Piramal Life Sciences is heading this institute as director. The vision of IICMS is to nurture and develop future experts in the field of chromatography and mass spectrometry.

The institute has entered into MoUs with some of the universities and more than a dozen industrial projects focusing on mass spectrometry have been completed in the past two years. It has also etched its modest presence in the international arena through presentations of three papers at the American Society for Mass spectrometry (ASMS) held in Canada in May 2012 and two more at the International Mass Spectrometry Conference (IMSC) in Kyoto in September 2012. To date, two national conferences on mass spectrometry have also been held in 2011 and 2012, that had attracted the who-is-who of mass spectrometry in this country.

What are your future plans for the company?
Our vision statement defines our goal - to build long lasting relationship with our customers. Spinco Biotech has become a lab-hold name across the country. This is achieved through continuous strengthening of our sales, marketing and support capabilities. Our short term approach to achieve this goal is to be the preferred partner to the Indian scientific community. Towards this end, we participate in activities from the time a scientist starts conceptualizing a project. We build capabilities, so our customers can recognize us as consultants in early stages and as a partner, as the project progresses. In the long term, Spinco is aiming to be the best and the most trusted and valued technology enabler for the scientific community.

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