

Looking Back, Looking Forward

Simon Saxby, CEO of Selcia, speaks to *EPC* about the changes that the pharma industry has faced over the past 12 months and his predictions for 2013



Prior to joining Selcia in 2011, Simon Saxby was a founder of Murex Diagnostics and a co-founder and Operations Director at Quantum Biosystems. Simon holds a BSc in Zoology from the University of Swansea. He is a member of the Institute of Directors' 'Policy Voice' forum.

***EPC:* How would you describe your business philosophy?**

SS: My philosophy is to keep it simple and always aim to add value, both practically and intellectually, for both internal operations and external customers. If we're able to provide scientific expertise and solutions that benefit our customers, they will continue to work with us. Establishing long-term relationships with our customers is the key to our success.

As CEO of a life sciences CRO, what have been your biggest challenges of 2012?

The challenges that we have faced in 2012 all relate to the global economic uncertainty in the markets in one way or another. Our challenge this year has been to expand our global customer base and establish our proprietary capillary electrophoresis (CE) and peptidylprolyl isomerase (PPIase) screening services as part of our integrated drug discovery CRO business.

And your biggest successes?

We've had a few successes this year, including demerging our IP into separate companies with the first licence agreement associated with our IP expected in 2012, and receiving accreditation under the French 'Credit d'Impot de Recherche' scheme. We were also able to achieve our revenue forecast for 2012 and grow our 14C custom radiolabelling API business.

What changes have you seen in the past 12 months?

Pharma customers are seeking more collaborations on the basis of shared risk with CROs, occasionally to unreasonable and unrealistic extents. Venture capitalists are backing more start-ups developing NCEs, and many more SMEs are having to secure grant funding to progress their IP.

How have strategic partnerships changed the pharma industry?

There seems to be a shift towards earlier stage partnerships between pharma and the biotech industry/SMEs where the pharma partner is willing to allow the SME to remain independent and provide much of the innovation, while sharing risk for a greater share of the upstream rewards.

Concerning strategic partnerships – what factors are key when considering such a collaboration?

When we establish strategic partnerships we always look to see how complementary services and/or technologies can be brought together to create good business synergy. Our business philosophies and the company cultures also have to be in sync; the inter-relationships, from individual scientist right through to the boardroom, have to work, and there also has to be trust. Lastly, there has to be common ground when it comes to industrial reputation – partners need to demonstrate equivalence in areas such as quality

of service, innovation and novel technologies.

Which parts of the world do you predict will evolve most in the next five years?

I believe that the Chinese life sciences market is going to evolve most in the next five years, closely followed by India. Chinese life science companies, as well as the government, are investing heavily in establishing relationships and they are raising their quality standards to meet the requirements needed to launch home-grown drugs in first world markets. It is also not inconceivable that the Chinese will acquire a major western pharma company within the next five years to give them immediate access to drugs, a pipeline for launch in China, and access to western markets. It has been reported that the Chinese have earmarked \$9 trillion for investment in life sciences. If that is true, acquisition of western pharma companies would be relatively easy to achieve.

How do you feel companies can maintain innovation in R&D for 2013?

This will largely be through strategic partnerships with pharma, and through grant funding, whether it be government or institutional grants.