Interview: Paolo Andreatta – CEO, E-Pharma Trento, Italy

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E-Pharma Trento is a pharmaceutical company specialized in development and production of niche oral delivery forms, such as soluble, effervescent, chewable and orally-disintegrating. After its foundation in 1993, E-Pharma Trento has become an international reference in these technologies by researching, creating and supplying R&D and industrial solutions to pharmaceutical and health companies.

E-Pharma was founded in 1993. Can you please give our readers a brief introduction of yourself? What were your key priorities when you took over as a general manager?

I've been with E-Pharma since the very beginning and I've conduced through the entire process of the company, even before we got the license and authorization from what was formerly AIFA, the Italian Regulatory Agency. Initially I focused my activity on the development of our own patented technology and later, when the company had some dossiers developed on that technology, I became involved in commercial activities. Since then, our main focus has been international expansion: we are moving into the generic business with products endowed with highly pharmaceutical differentiated forms. We are currently present in Australia and South Africa, but also want to target new countries, such as Vietnam, where we have already made some agreements. We are also trying to consolidate our presence in markets where we are already present, such as Venezuela and Peru.

A new target we are focused on is the Brazilian market: we are already working with a company approved by the local authority ANVISA. We think effervescent and specially patented formulations are something new that may be appealing in this market. We met with representatives from the Argentinian and Colombian governments who told us that there were very few companies producing effervescent delivery forms in the region. So this is a clear opportunity, we just need to explore it.

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E-Pharma provides its offering in both the pharmaceutical and nutraceutical sectors. Can you give us a breakdown of your activities in terms of turnover?

Our sales are 70 percent drugs and 30 percent foods. We produce food supplements with the same attention and quality levels we put into drug production. We consider food supplements as a top value quality product. 70 percent of our market is in Italy, while the remaining 30 percent is international business. We do know that our future business is abroad, in international markets. The way we usually do business is attending specialized events devoted to the pharma field and organized in Europe; but we also like to attend other kinds of conventions in markets where we can offer the technology as a plus with formulations based on combinations of paracetamol or ibuprofen, for instance.

This is our target because we are pushing our business with new formulations, new technology and new products. We strongly believe that over the next two to three years we can build something different in the market.

The E-Pharma plant covers almost 7000 m^2, including production, warehousing, labs, and offices. What are the most recent investments you have made into the plant?

In the last five years we have invested a consistent percentage of our turnover developing ideas that later become a new patent. One of the last achievements was a special kind of blister for very fragile tablets with which we were awarded the 1^{st} prize at CPhI 2013 as best packaging innovation.

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How big is your focus in innovation?

Implementing innovation is something we are forced to do. It is an incremental step we have to put in place to maintain our business in a crowded and competitive market. We collaborate with Big

Pharma companies because they see us as a partner not as a competitor. They easily show us ideas of new products; sometimes it is easier for them to have a reliable manufacturing company like us, who can develop the product in a short time. In the mid-term, we can offer innovations for new therapeutic needs. For the future we are thinking in terms of new patented products and produce them exclusively.

You serve some of the biggest names in the industry: Novartis, Sanofi, Teva… to name just a few. What makes you the partner of choice?

The best partner is someone you can rely upon. We say that: “When you have a problem, go to E-Pharma”.

What are your strategic priorities and objectives for the next three to five years?

Our best solution is to differentiate ourselves from contract manufacturing because we have a different approach to the market. We want to produce new formulations, new dosages and address our production on these new products.

Which would be your last message to the readers of our platform on behalf of E-Pharma?

We believe we can offer high quality products, which is the basis of our business, but we can also offer attention and assistance to our partners in terms of regulatory, quality support, problem solving and technology—and this is something you can hardly find in the market. We can help companies looking for internationalization with all regulatory-related problems. They need structure to support them; we have the experience required.

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