Interview: Emerson Lozano Garcia – General Manager & Founder, Bioquigen, Colombia



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Emerson Lozano Garcia, founder of chemical company Bioquigen, underlines the importance of collaboration with the pharmaceutical sector in reagents for diagnostics and quality control and the ways in which associations such as ACOPI (for small and medium sized businesses) have helped Bioquigen to achieve success in Colombia and allowed them a positive outlook for internationalization.

Mr. Lozano, to begin with, could you please introduce Bioquigen and its main activities to our international audience?

I founded Bioquigen in 2005, and the beginnings of the company were those of a distributor solely. We then realised, that there was a market space for diagnostic reagents and reagents for quality control. Thus, we launched some ten or 12 products of our own manufacturing that we introduced to a market we thought ready. We were bold in going against the established market trends; the results speak for themselves as we have more than 1,100 solutions in our portfolio today. Since then we have had numerous opportunities to show how we were able to evolve with or even ahead of the market. For instance, we strived to be granted ISO certifications early on and can present two to our clients today.

Bioquigen manufactures and commercialises reagents and chemical solutions for a wide range of industries – food and beverages, pharmaceuticals, water control and research –

as well as to third parties and entities of the state. How important is the pharmaceutical division within your portfolio?

It holds a primordial importance. In fact, it also concentrates a lot of our activity since we do not only commercialise pharmaceutical products but manufacture for that industry. We are producing components for the pharmaceutical industry that they utilize in their quality control processes, facilitating these same processes.

You are a manufacturer of chemical reagents as well as active in their commercialisation. Could you please expand on your current manufacturing capabilities?

Last year, we augmented our manufacturing capacity and we plan to invest in it further. When we had INVIMA (Colombian Food and Drug Control Agency) auditing us last year, they somehow decided to audit us not as the chemical company we are, but as a pharmaceutical company. However, our current plant does not hold the capacity to concur with the requirements in infrastructure that a pharmaceutical plant would have to align itself with. Therefore, we have decided to await the unveil of our brand-new plant which was already planned for a horizon of two to three years at that time.

Which aspects do you most focus on in order to achieve growth for your company?

Our main focus lies with healthcare and innovation. Specifically, we see a lot of potential in the diagnostics area for which we develop innovative reagents for the process. This business line first came to start when we realised, that there was an unattended need in the healthcare industry with that dimension. Back then a waiting period of 20 to 30 minutes for the analysis of a product on a patient was normal. We were able to modify our reagents for a specific product in a way that the whole analysis is completed in 15 seconds.

Can you share some successful examples of implementation of that approach?

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Our innovative approach is what made a Japanese company of renown chose us a partner for their health line because we were able to provide a product as specific as they had desperately tried to find. Bioquigen took on the task and was able to innovate in such a manner that it significantly reduced the time of analysis in the clinic laboratory where their product was being quality checked.

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When we met with ProColombia, they gave us the figure of an annual 11.6 percent growth of the chemical industry in Colombia since 2005. What are the main trends and opportunities in the market that Bioquigen faces and tries to seize upon?

Innovation of course is always a factor of disruption, in every industry, and the chemical one is no exception to that rule. This is something we are trying to follow very closely as we do not wish to be a company content with replicating the innovation of others. With a mindset on the potential of the market, we are able to continuously renew ourselves. For instance, for every communication platform we decide to work on, we are pursuing a data-based approach.

We are very regular in the launch of new products and are currently pursuing the development of various compounds in the diagnostics and renal treatment areas that are the most promising from our point of view.

What growth targets did you set for yourself and how do you aim to achieve them?

In 2016, we grew more than 60 percent, and this year we aim for a growth between 20 and 25 percent. We achieve these numbers by launching new products which hold the potential to foster the expected growth.

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What is your internationalization strategy and how do you pursue it?

In the near future, we plan an expansion to Peru and Ecuador, our direct neighbours. However, we do not plan to limit ourselves to a regional presence although it is that much easier given Colombia’s strategic location within the region. We are ultimately aiming to enter the United States of America and already work with Qatar and France through our Japanese partner.

Our ambitions are very much supported by the Chamber of Commerce and its internationalisation department. They provide us with help in the assessment of our target countries’ regulatory frameworks for instance. Furthermore, we also work with ProColombia and attend events such as the international bacteriology congress in Calí in October.

Bioquigen is a member of the Colombian Small and Medium Industry Association (ACOPI). What additional capabilities does this membership bring to your company?

Being a very small company, the membership in ACOPI has proven fundamental for us. Especially very small companies benefit a lot from belonging to a committee that has the power to make its voice heard. All the big MNCs are part of ANDI (Association of entrepreneurs in Colombia), and the small companies turn to ACOPI. This cooperation has proven very valuable for us. For instance, the association helped us with obtaining the ISO 9001 certification and are a tremendous support when it comes to the education of our employees who we can send on courses to them. In one, one and a half years we plan to become part of ANDI!

How would you define your partnering strategy?

With the associations and bodies of the state we pursue a compliance strategy, in order to align ourselves with the demands and requirements set. Complying can be seen as a challenge but in reality, it is an advantage since, by being part of an association, you are always well prepared for upcoming changes in regulation. Internationally, we partner with companies from Germany and the United States for the raw materials we import. However, for the commercialisation part we work with local Colombian companies.

Where do you see the main competition coming from and what would you say most differentiates you from your competitors?

From the other national companies, we differentiate ourselves by being true innovators. Everyone says they are an innovator, but Bioquigen has a label form the chamber of commerce to prove it. What differentiates us from our international competitors are our short reaction periods, how fast we are able to adapt to requests from our clients. As a local company, we have the means to have shorter response periods than many of the larger MNCs. And we do not simply replicate an existing model, we innovate in that regard as well. We have optimised our process with an excellent stock system, so that our reaction to a sudden demand by our client is significantly shortened.

Where will we find your company when we come back in five years' time?

In five years, we will have our new plant in place and will have internationalized our operations. You are today interviewing a future multinational company!

Where do you draw your daily motivation from?

I am one of those that think that if you are given something, you should transform it and make something else from it. So, every day, this is what I try to do. Moreover, I have a very strong will to transmit passion for our highly technical products and their primordial importance for a number of chemical reagents.

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