Carlos Espina – Managing Director, COMSA Cleanroom Technology, Spain



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Carlos Espina, managing director of COMSA Cleanroom Technology, a leading Spanish engineering firm, highlights the company's great successes over the last few years, their international reach, and their strategy to maintain continued growth.

What have been your largest achievements over the last two years?

We have experienced successful growth within the bio and pharma sectors, which have been a big revenue driver for the company. We grew from annual revenues of EUR 20 million two years ago, to reaching EUR 45 million this year.

Our strategy over this time has been heavily linked to the South American and Spanish markets by targeting big projects mainly in pharmaceutical and human medicine, but also the veterinary industry. In Brazil, we are the leading player in HVAC systems for the pharmaceutical, food and cosmetic sectors. In Mexico, we follow the same model with our Mexican branch, Eolis, which focuses its activity on all of Central America and operates in the same sector in Brazil. Throughout South America, we now undertake activity in Paraguay, Uruguay, Chile, Peru and Colombia, while in North Africa we have positioned ourselves in Algeria and Morocco.

From an operations standpoint, we have shifted from smaller or mid-sized activity to large-scale projects. As an important player, our overriding goal is to be the main project contractor and manager; meaning a general contractor for civil works, black utilities and pharmaceutical installation for clean utilities. These services entail architecture, medicinal gases, purified water, HVAC and production equipment among others, in other words, complete turnkey solutions for the pharmaceutical industry. As COMSA Corporación group has annual revenues of over EUR one billion, we only are looking for projects of minimum EUR three to six million.

How important is the bio and pharma sector for COMSA Cleanroom Technology?

COMSA Cleanroom Technology started in this area with the acquisition of a Swiss company focused on HVAC systems for the pharmaceutical market. In the beginning, we reached small projects with a specialized team. Today, we employ almost 500 people across all markets in which we operate, working from the stage of conceptual engineering to the final execution of the project.

In the current market conditions, the pharmaceutical industry is all about big value, and this is what we are aiming to achieve with our expertise in that sector and, specifically, in blow fill seals processes. In fact, we are currently closing a deal with a company in Malta to incorporate this technology.

The pharmaceutical industry is everchanging, and innovation is a big talking point for any company. What is the innovation that COMSA Cleanroom Technology brings to the bio and pharma space?

We have a specialized R&D team that is centred around new technologies, specifically in HVAC. That includes HVAC sterilization via peroxide as well as lean and maintenance systems. Our role is not only to bring the solution to partners when using HVAC, but also equally provide the required maintenance along the way and post-completion.

The engineering world is quite competitive. Where do you see the main competition coming from?

In Spain, we are the only company focused on full services for the pharmaceutical industry, but we internationally see strong competitors coming from countries such as Ireland, the US and Germany.

Our target is to consolidate our solid position in the South American, North African and Spanish markets. In the long run, that means in five or seven years from now, we must be able to compete against the largest players from the aforementioned nations.

How do you utilize COMSA Cleanroom Technology's expertise in many different sectors help gain a competitive advantage in the operations of the bio and pharma branch?

COMSA Corporación group has a workforce over 7,500, and as mentioned earlier, approximately 500 people make up the bio and pharma branch. Moreover, we have transversal connections with the rest of the organization. Actually, part of our specialized team in the pharmaceutical industry works for corporate areas such as the legal and finance departments, who are experts of the countries where we operate. Additionally, we have subsidiaries to reinforce our presence in local markets such as Paraguay or Uruguay, among others.

This local footprint is a must in the current pharmaceutical ecosystem, as each region and country have their own strict regulations and legal framework. We must constantly keep up to date to ensure we meet our partners changing needs by acting in a global way with a local mindset.

Where do you see the future trends of the pharmaceutical industry going, and how will your interaction with the sector transform to adapt to these changes?

Our overriding goal always is to act as the first-choice partner for big turnkey projects. It is a real challenge to understand what future lies ahead for the pharmaceutical sector, though we are targeting to consolidate our position in key markets.

Another key step to ensure we are ready for the upcoming years is to hire staff with a proper technological know-how as we always aim to lead the industry and offer quality services.

The company has achieved staggering growth over the last two years. What are your projections for 2019?

We want to reach around EUR 60 million annual revenue by the end of 2019. The major challenge to get this objective is the availability of human resources. Although Spain is one of the foremost countries in the field of engineering, there is a huge lack of experts for Bio&Pharma projects. To

revert this trouble, we are closely collaborating with the chemical institute of Sarriá (Instituto Químico de Sarriá), Barcelona, to develop the bio and pharma competence.

All in all, I truly believe that it is better to take step by step towards our growth targets, rather than all at once, as a way to ensure that we continue delivering our partners' needs.

In three to five years, what do you want COMSA Cleanroom Technology to represent?

To be the main contractor for big projects and work with high-tech partners. Equally important is partnering in simpler areas, such as HVAC and clean and black utilities, as these are the basis of everything we do.

Overall, it is about going hand in hand with the best global partners to offer our customers the best solutions in terms of cost, planning and quality.

You have been in the role and driven success now for over four years. What motivates you each and every day?

The team. We have a strong group of great engineers and technicians and this is our big advantage regarding the engineering market, and a motivating factor that keeps me going. If you surround yourself with the best people, success will come inevitably along with it.

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