Interview with Jason Peng, Vice President, Global Operations , AB SCIEX

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Tags: AB SCIEX

Can you please give our readers a brief introduction of AB SCIEX?

AB SCIEX provides scientific solutions for its customers, who are scientists that are dealing with complex chemistry, drug development and food safety. We provide them with mass spectrometry (MS) solutions and tools.

With the raising activity of R&D activities in the region, has the demand for mass spectrometry products grown?

The mass spectrometry market today has a value of approximately 2 billion USD worldwide and in the APAC region, the market is growing steadily. We are doing very well and this region is an important growth driver for AB SCIEX globally.

In this region we have presence in 3 main industries: with big pharma companies, universities and research institutes that look at proteomics studies, and the food industry. In the past years, due to diverse problems that have been arising in the food industry in the region, the demand of our solutions in food testing/toxicology activities have been growing considerably.

Furthermore, we have also seen considerable amount of research activities growing in APAC; therefore, we see important growth in the life science industry, especially in drug developments and solutions for CROs.

What is AB SCIEX’s presence in Singapore and how has it been expanding?

We have been present here since 2007 and our expansion has been enormous. In 2007, I came on board to help the company grow and establish its presence in Singapore and over the past 5 years we have been growing and we have been building up capabilities in the country. Today, Singapore is one of AB SCIEX`s manufacturing and sourcing bases. We have also established our commercial brand here, which helped us to further expand in the region. The time so far that we have been in Singapore has been very promising for us.

Furthermore, in the past five years, our staff in Singapore has grown by hundreds and we have made important investments. Singapore is a strategic place since we have designated it as global manufacturing hub for AB SCIEX.

Given that the company’s global manufacturing hub is located here, why do you think it is still advantageous to manufacture in a country like Singapore?

We had many discussions about why we should consider Singapore to be the center of our manufacturing operation and we decided that here we will get value from our investment. The ROI will be very valuable and that is what matters to us.

We made the decision to manufacture here since we knew that in Singapore we will be able to get the quality we need, and the time to market will be fast; therefore, it would be easier to launch our products and solutions. Furthermore, the productivity of people here is amazing and they have creative ideas, which are all elements that allow us to have a great scenario since it is not just about assembling products, but also looking at opportunities of how we can make our tools better.

Aside from its manufacturing and commercial footprint, six months ago, AB SCIEX opened a new APAC Regional Application & Training Centre in the Biopolis. What prompted this decision? What will be the main activities that will be conducted and what is the aim of the centre?

The centre will serve the entire Asia Pacific region and it will help us in two crucial tasks: first, it will be a training centre where our customers will come and our personnel will train them on how to use our mass spectrometry tools.
Secondly, there will also be a lab where our customers can come so we can share with them the capabilities of our products. In this lab they can bring their samples and then we run some of these samples for them on order to prove the efficiency and excellence of our solutions and tools.

We are very excited about this centre since all the ideas and solutions that can come out from Singapore will benefit the region as a whole.

How come the company is so committed to Singapore?

Because for us Singapore is strategically located; from here you can reach any place in Asia Pacific. Moreover, Singapore has an amazing talent base than in our niche— MS— is really appreciated, since it is not easy to explain how MS works and here we find talent that learns it at a very fast speed, who are simultaneously very productive and efficient.

Furthermore, the government has been playing a key role in building the infrastructure and the favorable conditions for the life science industry; hence, doing business here is very easy for us. On this same note, as the government is pushing to boost life science, many of our custumers are located here and conduct research activities that require the use of our solutions and tools. For all these reasons it makes total sense for AB SCIEX to be committed to Singapore.

In terms of AB SCIEX's portfolio, what are the star products or solutions that you have specifically for the life science sector and what impact do they have on the industry?

Mass spectrometry tools are among the most accurate tools to detect what is inside a chemical compound and how much is in it.It is a very accurate tool for detecting organic chemical compounds as well. Therefore, we help our customers in the big pharmaceutical companies to speed their drug research process in the different phases of drug discovery. For example, we can provide them with different solutions to identify the compound and help them understand how the drug interacts with the human body by analyzing the patient's blood or fluids.

Our portfolio is very wide and complete, ranging from triple quadrupoles and QTRAP technology to our unique TripleTOF technology for quantitative and qualitative analysis. We also offer a suite of software applications that make it easier for people who are not experts in this technology to use mass spectrometry for better analysis in their laboratories. We believe we offer the best value of mass spectrometry solutions to scientists and laboratory technicians.

Similar to other companies, AB SCIEX is joining forces with other players to deliver better solutions. Do you think that partnerships are the cure all today?

Partnerships are an important mechanism and channel for business growth. Today, business is becoming increasingly dynamic and complex; therefore, partnerships and collaborative development are part of survival and growth.

At AB SCIEX, our activities span from joining forces with other companies to increase our solutions, to partnering with our customers to see what they need from us and how we can jointly design a solution to solve their problems.

In the current pharma dynamics, where do companies like AB SCIEX fit in?

The pharma industry is in a challenging situation since there is a patent cliff and lack of blockbuster drugs: therefore, they are looking into biologics and other areas to develop innovation and develop drugs to boost their pipeline. In this perspective, our role is to help them to speed up that process by providing them the adequate tools and solutions to help them get quicker results in a more accurate and cost-effective way. We have our BiologicsFocus Initiative, and we invite pharma scientists to join our BiologicsFocus Dicussion Group on LinkedIn to share insight and explore new questions.

In brief, we help them to be more productive and generate resources quicker, so then they can hopefully get regulatory approvals and consequently revitalize the industry.

Looking into the further, what do you expect from AB SCIEX in the region?

We see AB SCIEX continuing to grow and become stronger. Today, we already have a significant presence here, and Singapore is a strategic location for the company. APAC is growing; therefore, we are going to supply more market-driven innovations for this market. We believe that continuing to strengthen our presence in this region will help us better understand the needs of our custumers, which will allow us to push the limits and provide timely, tailor-made solutions.

In terms of a broader perspective, in the past decade since the BMS Initiative, Singapore has been putting in place the right polices, incentives and developing human talent and infrastructure to become the Biopolis of Asia. Do you think that Singapore has chances to become the next global hub for biomedical science?

Singapore has great potential. If we look at the success factors for the biomedical industry— a research driven industry where talent is key— Singapore has it. Furthermore, the Singaporean government is very transparent and proactive in terms of business environment and this creates the base to attract top global talent and, in turn, boosts research.

What do you think will be the greatest challenge for Singapore to meet their ambitions?

Singapore could improve in sustainability, by creating a home-grown research business, since we cannot depend on global leaders to do high-level research. We need more people that can translate ideas into product and execute; therefore, we have to further grow our local talent, which is getting started, but we are still in an initial phase.

Talent, as you mentioned, is one of the most important elements of the industry. It is also one of the biggest challenges. How do you manage to retain your talent at AB SCIEX?

We retain our talent by sharing a relationship with them and by motivating them to be part of the winning story of the company; in turn associating the company's success to themselves. Of course, compensation is important, but the key is that people feel comfortable in the company, that they feel that they have flexibility and they are encouraged to innovate.

What is the most gratifying part of working at AB SCIEX?

There are various factors. It is very flattering because the products we are making are really helping people; there is a noble purpose behind the technology we are pursuing.

Secondly, we are working with wonderful people, and part of my aim is to grow our local talent base and expose them to different business dynamics and grow our team.

Also, I am proud that we bring hundreds of good jobs to Singapore and that we bring scientific innovation and challenge science.

What would you like to be your final message for our readers?

What is crucial for us, as a scientific instrumentation company, is having a technology vision and leading the way where we can win together with our custumers. We are being innovative and pushing the boundaries of scientific frontiers, push the limits in engineering and, at the same time, developing unique solutions that meet customer needs today.

It is an exciting time for Asia Pacific and Singapore, We have been enjoying success and it has been a great experience operating here. We hope that we can continue by launching more products to create an even more exciting story.

In the next five to ten years, Asia Pacific will continue to grow in the pharma and life science sector, so there is no better time to take advantage of that than now. Singapore is the place to be.

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