

Interview: Alain Sainsot - President, Amatsigroup, France



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Amatsigroup, a Contract Development and Manufacturing Organization (CDMO), provides services throughout both preclinical and clinical phases. Leading over 200 highly qualified employees with a portfolio of over 300 clients, President Alain Sainsot shares Amatsigroup's impressive recent growth which positions the company towards being a leading French player in its sector.

In 2015, Amatsigroup witnessed a truly impressive growth rate of 27 percent. How did the company begin, and what expertise does the company provide in the market?

The pharmaceutical development world is changing. From a manufacturing point of view, drug discoveries are numerous and business dynamics are evolving, primarily considering the influence of large and mid-sized pharmaceutical companies in the market. Around four years ago, large pharmaceutical companies began to allocate more resources into outsourced research development processes. This market is very fragmented, where components of development are divided among many small companies. In Northern Europe alone, there are approximately 500 small-scale companies dedicated to outsourced development.

Amatsigroup serves as an European engine of structuration. With an annual turnover of 33 million Euros (37.1 million USD), we are positioned as one of the leaders in France in this regard, if not the definitive leader in the market. Last year alone we experienced an eleven percent increase in

organic growth, and most of our growth has been organic in nature.

Acquisitions are also an element of our company's build-up strategy. Recently, in January 2016, our company solidified an acquisition of the Belgian company Q-Biologicals, which specializes in Bio-process development & Bio-manufacturing, thus extending our offer to biologicals. This acquisition was integral to our overall strategy, as business in 2015 was ninety percent dedicated to small molecules. Involvement in the biologicals business is key to the development of Amatsigroup, and part of our efforts to meet our goals to be both an actor in the biological field and an international player.

Today you say that you have an innovative integrated approach. In what way are all the companies that you've acquired integrated?

As a general approach, Amatsigroup strives to maintain cooperation with the leaders and CEOs of companies that we procure through acquisitions. The founders and leaders of these companies are experts in their field, and offer great knowledge and skills. Maintaining flexibility and a level of open-mindedness about how these companies function and execute their work is crucial to establishing successful unification following an acquisition. Spending time with leaders of companies, as well as their employees to learn about their work dynamics, as well as their clients and connections is a strategy that we practice at Amatsigroup, particularly to understand the approach of the companies we have acquired, and to respect it. There is a balance that must be met by both respecting the cultures of companies that have been acquired and merged with Amatsigroup, as well as establishing a unique Amatsigroup culture as well. Gradually we put a social policy in place uniting all affiliated parties under one umbrella of the same company culture. Bringing our various groups together, working to establish synergies across different core businesses, including early development works, testing, formulation, manufacturing, packaging and distribution of clinical batches, is a key component of this. We bring everyone together to discuss developing and manufacturing a drug so that we inform all on the full process, and understanding of their role in the lifecycle of a drug.

As of 2014, Amatsigroup began to expand internationally through acquisitions. What place does international development play in your growth strategy?

A few years ago, the primary objective of our company strategy was to reach a turnover of 50 million Euros (54 million USD) by 2017. We are currently ahead of target, and are anticipating reaching this threshold within the coming year. In around six years, the new goal is to double this figure, and become a company reaching a turnover of 100 million Euros (109 million USD).

There are two drivers to achieve this goal. The first is focusing on our core business, targeting testing capabilities and formulation of small-scale manufacturing. Our second target is to expand our activity, in Northern Europe. Additionally, in the United States we have a facility (centrally located in the “vet corridor” of Indiana in the American Midwest) dedicated to In Life studies & commercial offices to promote our veterinary services & CTM activities in Europe. Beyond this presence in the US, we are now focusing more intently on our presence in Europe and, as we are a French company, our presence in France. Benelux, Switzerland and Germany are also key regions to prospect for us. Also, the UK represents a promising market as well as a gateway to new opportunities in the US.

Toulouse, where you are based, is known as the airspace capital of Europe, yet also has the family Fabre and Pierre Fabre. What is your particular connection to this company, and how has it influenced your career?

Being based in the Toulouse region, a leading factor in my founding of Amatsigroup can be accredited to my regional proximity to, and experience with Pierre Fabre, with whom I spent nearly fifteen years. This laboratory espoused a fantastic approach to developing a large company, but remaining somewhat isolated in the countryside where the company found space to develop itself. From humble beginnings as a small chemist shop, the company was able to grow and expand over the past several decades. This is testament to a unique quality of business in France, where companies with modest beginnings have been able to grow to be large and influential in the international marketplace. Last November, we engaged in a partnership with Pierre Fabre through the acquisition of Saint Augustin testing lab. (France).

Amtsigroup has big visions for growth. What is the next big objective you have set for the company?

As a relatively small company with great ambitions for growth, we do not have an end-goal or a finite objective. We have the ability as an SME to continually and gradually grow and gauge the next objective based on our progress. The risk of encountering bad results always posed the potential of limitations, but fortunately, this has not been the case for Amatsigroup because we have chosen our acquisition targets carefully and because of our ability to integrate those companies into our management model. Our long-term vision is to see the company increasing its presence in the US & establishing business opportunities with the Asian market in. Optimistically, we like to believe that we are in the beginning chapters of a success story that will unfold in the coming decade.

As for potential clients, and why they should choose Amatsigroup, we are continually recognized for our expertise, and we are striving to only raise our standards higher. Proximity, both in the human and organizational sense, is a company priority, and the more involved that Amatsigroup can become in the supply chain business, the more expertise the company will be able to establish. Understanding the supply chain is something that I personally bring from my experience as an industrial manager, and I wish for this to become an integral component in the work of Amatsigroup. It is important to serve as a liaison between our clients, and the experts that collaborate together with our teams.

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