Interview: Joshua Chang – CEO, RDD Lab, Taiwan



"The local CRO industry has many advantages; the results of which I am convinced will be seen very soon."

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Joshua Chang, CEO of RDD Lab

, *describes the scope of the company's operations, the expansion of the firm's capacities, and emerging trends in the CRO industry.*

Please begin by introducing yourself and the main operations and services of your CRO.

I have a background in biochemistry and received a PhD from Cornell University in New York. Afterwards, I worked as a scientist in a drug development company that was founded by famous doctor David Ho – scientific founder of Taimed. I joined RDD initially as a business developer involved in sales and marketing. Gradually, I got more involved in the research and development field. Finally, two years ago, I became a CEO. RDD Lab was founded in 2003 by current chairman Mr. Lin. Initially, the company started its work following the trend of the US pharmaceutical companies that wanted to outsource contract projects to the CRO companies. Today, RDD Lab with its long- standing presence in Taiwan has a great reputation and specializes in custom synthesis and specialty chemicals used in pharmaceutical, biotech and electronic industry.

You mentioned a long-standing presence in Taiwan since 2003. What have been the major milestones so far?

We have attracted many international clients; most of them from the USA. Merck & Co. is one of our long-term clients; we were their supplier for five years. Our client portfolio also includes pharmaceutical and small biotech companies in the US. However, most of our clients are local

biotech companies such as OBI Pharma, Taimed, Pharmaessentia, TLC and several API producers: Formosa Lab, Scinopharm, and CCPC. We also provide services to several start-up companies focused on new drug development.

Are you looking to expand into new markets?

Yes, currently we are specializing in the custom synthesis of small molecules. However, we want to expand our expertise and develop our own products such as reagents and chemicals, while serving as an intermediate for some market products. As we recently received grants from the government, we already started the setting phase for the mentioned ambitions. Consequently, we are not only doing the research for the companies, but we are also developing products.

Could you walk us the service portfolio offered to your clients?

We are specialized in custom synthesis of small molecules and contract research projects for clients willing to scale their production. Additionally, we have partnerships with local API producers. Our collaboration is focused on checking the feasibility on their products to scale up. Several local API producers use our service. Our main focus is on the pharmaceutical industry. However, we also collaborate with some of the biggest electronic companies in Taiwan, as they need chemicals.

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What differentiating factor do you offer to entice clients to choose your services as opposed to a multinational clinical research firm?

RDD Lab is a small company. We don’t have a complicated hierarchical management model. Consequently, we are flexible and able to provide a quick responding system. Additionally, we offer competitive prices and an excellent reputation for high quality work. For example, our competitors in China increased their prices last year due to increasing costs. On the contrary, Taiwan is a very stable market; increasing the prices is a very rare phenomenon.

What are the main trends occurring in Taiwan’s CRO market over the past few years? Given your industry expertise, how do you see CRO companies evolving within the next five to ten years?

The CRO industry is still young in Taiwan. Looking back historically, Taiwan didn’t have a good pharmaceutical environment. However, the number of companies in the early stage drug development business has increased. Consequently, the demand for our services and clinical research has increased as well and will increase even more in the future. The quality of the

relationship with CROs will be crucial for the development of the local industry. Currently, companies tend to use several CROs at once; including CROs based abroad. This is difficult to manage due to different time zones and higher travel expenses for negotiation purposes. Finding a qualified CRO abroad is still a trend occurring in Taiwan. However, as the number of local CROs is continuously growing, I believe local CROs have a bright future. The local CRO industry has many advantages; the results of which I am convinced will be seen very soon.

What is the role of the government in moving the CRO industry forward?

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The role of the government is very important as they provide capital and direction for the whole industry. Their policies play a crucial part in empowering companies to step forward. The government has benefited the work of RDD Lab as well. We received a governmental grant that helped us to gain confidence to attract a lot of clients. The government's quality review of the projects and products we offer was very positive; they encouraged us to continue to grow and move forward with the services we provide. Also, the government supports new drug companies in that tax relief is offered to companies who use local CRO services. I believe this is mutually beneficial and supportive for the growth of local industry.

How do you see RDD Lab contributing to the local innovative ecosystem of Taiwan?

We are contributing in the area of early stage drug development. Our services are crucial to drug companies and our contribution is seen through assistance in creating an intellectual property. As drug companies are focused on creating an intellectual property, our role is to help them achieve this.

What are the key objectives that you would like to achieve in the upcoming three years?

RDD Lab is focused on getting listed on the Taiwan stock market. We are also expanding our area of business into developing products- we will collaborate with one large company and eventually another one. Our other objectives are focused on building the presence and attracting more clients.

What is your final message for our readers?

We offer strong value proposition, excellent quality of services and working standards brought from US and applied to Taiwan. We are looking forward to gaining global industry recognition very soon due to high quality service we provide.

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