

Juan Sénquiz - Founder, President & CEO, JC Automation, Puerto Rico



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JC Automation (JCA) is a Puerto Rico-based consulting firm specializing in the life science industry with the mission of filling a gap between technology and regulatory requirements. Founder & CEO

Juan Sénquiz explains how the data revolution in pharma manufacturing has propelled the company to new heights, the unique expertise JCA has built on the island and is now exporting to the US mainland, and his focus on attracting and developing the next generation of engineering talent in a knowledge-driven industry.

Could you start by updating our readers on how JCA has developed since the last time we met in 2015?

In the last four years, data has become the main engine for production and is transforming the factory floor, a revolution that can be compared to the replacement of steam by electricity a century ago. The industry as a whole is now driven by harnessing the value of data. In the past, plants had the data but were not realizing its true value. Plant managers now understand that collecting data at every step and making it available increases efficiency. These are exciting times

for us as we have the competency in helping our customers make sense of data.

Pharma manufacturing on the island has experienced a consolidation trend in the last four years prompting service providers to diversify their portfolio. How has your portfolio of solutions evolved?

Since 2015, we have expanded our offering in automation by forming relationships with leading software providers including OSIsoft, Wonderware and Rockwell Automation among others. In order to implement solutions based on these technologies, we have developed our team capabilities. Through implementing these new solutions, business has doubled in the last four years. Most of the projects we perform now have to do with installing and servicing equipment to capture data from all sources on the shop floor, integrate it into the data center, and making it available to operators through Human Machine Interfaces (HMIs). Data is an incredibly useful tool for them to be agile and implement manufacturing processes of a new product quicker, validate them faster, and make sure they operate at top performance. Together with tools such as six sigma, the value of these data have given the industry a proactive analysis of their process.

Large manufacturing companies tend to work with large service providers. What has been your recipe to convince them to choose JCA?

At the end of the day, you need to build credibility by delivering what you promise. If you are able to do that consistently, there will always be an opportunity because people know they can depend on us to get results. JCA's agility and elasticity has allowed us to successfully help our customers consistently succeed.

When we interviewed Ronald Pacheco from Validation and Engineering Group (VEG), he said that consolidation in pharma manufacturing has resulted in a surplus of service providers. In this environment, how do you differentiate yourself from other companies providing validation and automation solutions?

Consolidation has come as a result of the industry evolution process. JCA has also evolved and we have identified and developed service consolidation opportunities by exploiting the inherent dependencies of the Automation, IT and Validation Services. Providing a full solution allows JCA to

reduce cost, time and increase quality.

For instance, if you work on a validation project and run into a challenge that requires something being done differently, you can help the customer remove that roadblock even though it was not originally part of the project's scope. It just makes sense to have one provider that understands both environments. Moreover, there are very few companies on the island that possess expertise in automation since it is much more difficult, and the right talent is hard to come by, especially when you have to compete with large software companies. Incorporating company values to this equation differentiate ourselves from others.

On that point, how do you attract, train and retain engineering talent in automation?

We have created an internal training and recruitment program called IMPETUS. The objective of IMPETUS is to leverage the experience we have accumulated through the years and pass it on to the new generation of graduates as well as provide them with the option to stay on the island and do what you love. They go through an eight-week program we designed during which they learn about and work with all the technologies they will see on the field. We simulate different cases of problems they might encounter and the right way of handling them. We are now in the fourth generation of this program and the reception from customers has been extraordinary. All the young engineers we have been trained are now working for the company and performing well. Not only does it allow us to help the young generation, but also the customers. We strive to create a work environment where people are happy and are able to grow professionally by providing them with all the necessary resources to meet the needs of customers.

Last year, JCA joined Parsec's partner program to implement solutions based on their TrakSYS platform. Why did you decide to join this partner program?

TrakSYS is a next-generation, unified Manufacturing Operations Management (MOM) software platform. What I like most about TrakSYS is that it is a modular solution which brings complete flexibility to deploy only the functions desired, without major software development efforts. It can get customers visibility into their Manufacturing Process including built-in modules for Production, Inventory, Quality and Maintenance applications.

You have made significant strides in driving forward your expansion on the US mainland. Can you update us on your operations there and how significant the business is for JC Automation?

US market is a big market and is key to our operation. Our local customers refer us to their colleagues in the US. Once we get the opportunity, it is up to us to execute and the process repeats.

Moreover, the US market has given us the ability to provide more work options to our associates including the opportunity to move to the US mainland and develop themselves in a new environment, while still having the option to come back home. It also gives us the opportunity to diversify our workforce and capabilities.

When we met Secretary Manuel Laboy from PRIDCO, prior to the ousting of Ricardo Rosselló, he highlighted that in contrast to previous administrations, the government is focused on supporting local suppliers and service providers to large manufacturing companies on the island. Do you think the government has done enough to support service providers on the island?

The government has done some things in the right direction. They have recognized the value of the service industry as a crucial part of the economy and the ability to export services as an activity that needs to be incentivized. Said incentives have allowed us to invest more money in the business and get more talent involved. They have helped us grow significantly.

What is your vision for JCA in the next five years?

Securing talent is more important than ever, and I want to continue enhancing our attractiveness for the next generation of engineers and scientists. We have made great strides in this direction, but we still have a lot to do to be more attractive and competitive to new talent. Looking at what our new recruits have been able to achieve since they joined fills me with great pride and is my motivation to keep going.

In terms of business, revenues have doubled since 2015 and continue to grow. My vision is to create an enjoyable working platform that fosters the growth of our associates and the communities that we serve.

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