Roman Grunt – CEO, Quinta Analytica, Czech Republic



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Roman Grunt, CEO of Quinta Analytica, gives us an overview of the activities of how the Czech firm has managed to attract customers across the country and beyond by positioning itself as the one-stop-shop for both the clinical and analytical aspects of clinical research. He also explains how Quinta Analytica is entering the field of first-in-human studies and receiving increased interest from Chinese partners.

What made you decide to take the reins of Quinta Analytica in 2017?

It was a chance for me to get to know a new business, to learn something new from the pharmaceutical industry. It was an opportunity for my colleagues at Farmak who had the chance to showcase their potential through continuing Farmak's growth and also for me, to take an opportunity with a private equity investor and try to bring something new to this nice company. It was an interesting challenge and I knew we could possibly do great things with Quinta Analytica.

You joined soon after the Genesis Fund sold its majority stake in the company. What strategic priorities did you in place to write the next chapter of the company's history?

I arrived one and a half years after the Genesis Fund sold its majority stake and then they had a structure with three decision-makers for each part of the business. I am therefore the first CEO of

Quinta Analytica, responsible for the strategic direction and in charge of building the most efficient structure and teams for the company. This has been a transition from a family-owned company toward, still a small to medium size company, adopting a more modern strategy and taking advantage of today's innovation whilst attracting new customers, restructuring the business and bringing diversification in the customer portfolio. We put a lot of effort into increasing our added value to increase our customer base and ensure their loyalty.

We have done quite well in increasing our customer base, considering that Quinta Analytica has historically been growing from four to five customers creating the majority of the business. Such a situation means that if one of your customers decides to change its priority and use a different supplier, it is the business' prosperity that is at stake. Therefore, I made it my priority to grow and diversify our customer base, especially through reinforcing our analytical business that attracts customers among multinational pharmaceutical companies. The clinical department of Quinta Analytica remained stable, despite having two of our historical customers deciding to their priorities and stopped conducting clinical trials. We focused on absorbing the results of the previous management as best as we could, so 2018 and 2019 were years of consolidation of the different departments of Quinta Analytica.

Quinta-Analytica is a provider of analytical and clinical services for pharmaceutical, biotechnology and generics companies. Could you introduce your footprint and services in more detail?

Quinta is positioned as a one-stop-shop company providing integrated solutions, with the development of the API through analytical work: testing the API and the final dosage for both the original and generic products. Once we have the API ready, if a company wishes to bring to market final product, they will have to run clinical trials as well which is again an area where we can accompany our client. We would do all the procedures including pharma testing, pharmacodynamics, measuring statistical revisions, and finally, as an outcome, the company can support our client with registering its product.

Quinta's original expertise is in the analyses and testing of small-molecule drugs and generics. However, biologics have changed the rules of the pharmaceutical industry, and are one of the fastest-growing classes of therapeutic compounds, outpacing the growth of small-molecule drugs. How have you adapted the company to this revolution?

We are doing both small and big molecules like proteins and hormones for example. We are sharing our expertise with a very well-respected hospital here through clinical cooperation. We are also evaluating the area of first-in-human studies, which is a segment that we aim to strongly develop within Quinta Analytica. These are specific studies that need to be conducted inside of a hospital and under very strict rules. Therefore, cooperation is the best way to enter these new fields and make our clients benefit from our experience.

Bioequivalent studies have two different aspects, the first one is the clinical part for which we run the study through our clinic, second one is the bioanalytical laboratory. This is Quinta Analytica's main competitive advantage: we have the structure to conduct the whole process in-house and deliver results to our clients that are ready to be submitted to the authorities as they are. And having a bio laboratory one floor above our clinic brings great advantage to our customers by eliminating any samples handling and having one supplier for the whole study

In December, you were a guest speaker at the First International Forum on Innovation and Research of Drugs for Cancer event in Tianjin. What makes Quinta an expert service provider in oncological drug R&D?

We are capable to cover all the therapeutics areas and are not limited to oncology. However, we saw the opportunity to participate in this forum of specialists as one of our partners is doing pioneering work in this field and revolutionizing the way we give treatment to cancer patients. They strongly benefit from this cooperation with Quinta Analytica as we assist with the analytical work and by support in preclinical and clinical trials. Actually, we have such a cooperation thanks to the support and referencing we had from another client who recommended us to this partner, organizer of the forum. The main audience was scientists developing the drug, with experience in chemistry and pharmacology, they wanted to learn more about the studies, what is the full process and how to tackle it. They can benefit from Quinta Analytica's expertise once the drug is developed: we can help them to bring it to the market, walk them through the phases and support them with the analytical work that they will need to present to authorities.

What makes you the partner of choice for these companies in ensuring that their medicines reach the market on time and in the necessary quality?

That is a good question with a simple answer: Quinta Analytica’s structure is very different from that of the big firms. We offer much greater flexibility, as a small company there is direct contact with the project’s leaders and management, and that allows us to significantly reduce timelines in delivering comprehensive results. Our client portfolio is made of both big pharmaceutical companies on the one hand and biotech companies and start-ups on the other one. And these smaller structures especially appreciate our vertically integrated process, meaning that we offer them a full solution and that if they have any problem with the project they can easily call our management and solve it together.

Quinta also participated in CPhI China where you had meetings with many Asian pharma companies. What do you see as the main challenges these companies face when entering the European market, and how can you support their EU business strategies?

Chinese company are more interested in being successful in their local market than on conquering new European markets because China is a market of 1.5 billion people when Europe is only 300 million people. What is more interesting for them, and where Quinta Analytica can help, is to speed up the product registration process in China. This can be achieved through registering the product first in Europe, which includes running the required studies and getting the marketing authorization. After this, they may return to China with such EU approval and apply for Chinese registration.

In the life sciences industry, the Czech Republic is somewhat unknown, and Czech companies in the field feel they need to overcome a certain stigma. How do you convince large multinational companies to trust the quality of your work?

We do not compromise on the quality of the work we provide to fit a potential customer that would offer a price too low for us to be able to accept it without sacrificing some quality of the work we do. We treat our customers as a partner, the quality of our work is what makes us most proud at Quinta Analytica and it leads us to more and more referencing to new customers and positive feedbacks from the existing ones. This is something we will never compromise on because Quinta Analytica’s spotless reputation is the result of years of continuous efforts on providing an impeccable work to each of our partners and building the company’s credibility in the Czech Republic and beyond. It is what inspires trust from our long-term partners and their trust is the most important thing we could hope for, so we need to be worthy of it.

We have actual proof of Quinta Analytica’s quality of work: we had more than eleven FDA inspections, which corresponds to a more than ten years history of successful inspections and a very successful track record overall. The large majority of our new clients come from referencing and word of mouth, combined of course with personal contacts.

We also offer advisory, meaning that a customer can walk in with his idea and we will have a two-sided discussion with him and work together on how best to achieve his objective, what would be the best strategy to adopt and what necessary work needs to be done. Giving biotech and other small companies a strategic direction often saves them a lot of time by cutting out all the unnecessary work.

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