

Interview: Pedro Tejada â?? Co-Founder and Vice President, Right Way Environmental Contractors Inc., Puerto Rico



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Pedro Tejada of Right Way Environmental introduces the environmental and life science markets in Puerto Rico and elaborates on the challenges that the company faces.

What were the main reasons for the establishment of Right Way Environmental?

I have worked in the environmental field since 1983. In 1995, my wife and I decided to establish our own company to provide quality environmental and construction services to Puerto Rico. We started out offering our services to consulting groups that were doing business in the pharmaceutical and life science industry with projects for Pfizer, BMS and MSD. In addition, we also worked for the state and government. Over time, we became a prime contractor for various divisions for the Department of Defense, such as the U.S. Navy, U.S. Airforce and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Currently, the public sector is our main market and our clients hire us on a recurring basis because our business is in our name. We like to do things the right way, the first time around. We complete projects on a timely basis, cost efficiently and safely. Indeed, safety first is a main goal in our company.

What are some of the daily challenges you face?

Environmental remediation is very diverse and can be quite complicated because there are many options to any issue our clients may have. Finding the right solutions is therefore key to resolving any challenges in a cost-efficient manner. One problem that we come across frequently is the generation of hazardous waste. This is a problem that pharmaceutical companies face in particular. As Puerto Rico is an island, we need to take into account this waste when planning a new project as hazardous waste is a major cost factor in any project.

Usually, when we start new projects, the damage has already happened in terms of hazardous waste generation and we mostly attend already closed facilities. However, occasionally we also install control systems in order to prevent contamination. When engaging in these construction projects, environmental protection and waste reduction are always key priorities.

As time has passed, both public and private organizations have become more conscious of their environmental responsibility, which means that they usually have taken measures on their own. However, they still bring in service providers like Right Way to provide them with specific solutions to their issues. This awareness of environmental responsibility was started in the 1970s but a lot of the problems we attend to originate from before that time.

We have recently seen a considerable amount of new investments in the healthcare and life science sector in Puerto Rico. Might those investments offer an opportunity for you to return to the life sciences sector?

Yes, we have been exploring this opportunity for the last two years. Even though the pharmaceutical and medical device industry is smaller than it used to be in the 1980s and 1990s, it is making a comeback due to the availability of human asset. Puerto Rico has an immense pool of talented

people with a high capacity to work in a very controlled and regulated environment. You don't get this kind of quality control and quality assurance in any other nearby countries and pharmaceutical companies know that. Therefore, there is a marketplace for these manufacturers to expand their operations here. The fact that seven out of ten of the world's top selling drugs are manufactured here shows that there is still a thriving industry in Puerto Rico. However, it is a very demanding market that is difficult to get into. First, most of the life science companies already have service providers and we need to prove that we can perform better than they do and second, pharmaceutical manufacturers nowadays have environmental control systems in place to prevent spills or reduce waste. Despite these limitations, we are optimistic and expect to engage in new pharmaceutical projects in the near future.

How do you stay up-to-date with the internal developments of life science companies in order to provide continual service and maintenance?

We don't have any issues keeping up with these developments. A majority of our work is for the federal government and their procurement and requirements do not change that much or that often. When we work for federal contractors the end client is the federal government. This means that not only do we have the same client but the same set of rules apply to everyone equally. For example, since 1995 we have serviced the U.S. Corps of Engineers annually because we not only attend to their needs but we also provide good service and are very professional in our conduct.

What makes Right Way Environmental Contractors the right way?

We conduct business within the law and environmental regulations. We have a significant human asset within our company. A lot of employees have been with us for 20 years, since the beginning of our company. Moreover, the trust of our clients in the quality of services we provide is a big asset for us as well. This is how we have attracted recurring business from the same clients. We believe that this is the only way to do it and therefore have been looking at expanding into other markets beyond the federal government. While the pharmaceutical industry in Puerto Rico is experiencing growth and investment right now, business in the government sector is shrinking because of the current economic situation. This opens the market for us but it also means that at a local level it will be more competitive.

Puerto Rico is going through economic turmoil right now at the government level but not at the private level. While the state government is broken, the pharmaceutical industry is reviving and overall private industry is growing as we speak and we want to be part of this growth.

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