

Simon Björklund CEO, Bioglan, Sweden



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Simon Björklund, CEO of Bioglan, a Swedish CDMO owned by Reig Jofre, explains the company's twofold business model of developing and manufacturing products for local and international clients. He highlights the advantages of manufacturing and operating in Sweden, while emphasizing his future vision of developing and out-licensing Bioglan's own products.

Simon, you have worked in academia and research in the biology and biotech field for part of your career. What was your motivation behind switching sides and eventually joining Bioglan?

My reason for choosing academia, in the beginning, was my early fascination for biotech and particularly gene technology. Sweden, ranked as number one in the EU for innovation, has for a long time had an incredibly high ranking worldwide when it comes to innovation with its strong basic and applied research footprint. Working in this area for some years, I got insights into science, technological tools and potential applications, but also about the life sciences system, for instance about funding and the R&D programs of life science companies and academia. After a few years in this field, I decided to change my career path, as my area of focus had become very specialized and a more general role suited me better. Hence, I took on a role in business development in the life sciences sector. In 2009, Bioglan was acquired by the pharmaceutical company Reig Jofre, publicly traded on the Spanish Stock Exchange, which gave the company its own product portfolio and market authorizations. At that time, Bioglan needed someone to support and increase sales of these products. I joined Bioglan to build the marketing team and the Nordic presence. 4 years ago, I took over the role as CEO of the company.

Bioglan is a Swedish CDMO but also has its own products. Can you explain the business model?

We do have two separate business units, one being our own product portfolio and the other one is based upon contract development and manufacturing operations of pharmaceutical and medical device products. In the CDMO part of Bioglan, we are involved very early in the value chain, helping companies to develop efficient and cosmetic attractive products that can be scaled up to commercial-scale manufacturing. We have a very open and honest approach, which is highly valued by our customers. For certain products, we started with a few batches per year during the 90s and continuously scaled up to current volume where we run several batches per day in 24-hour shifts. It is a very good collaboration that has secured a long-lasting relationship with our customers. Our manufacturing plant is quite flexible, with various batch sizes and capacities to fill jars and tubes of various kinds all according to GMP and ISO13485.

Bioglan has been growing rapidly in the last few years, now employing more than 100 people. What do you see as the main strength and differentiator of Bioglan?

We are listening a lot to the needs and requirements of our customers to provide the right solutions for them. However, we are also helping clients that may not yet have much experience in formulation, clinical and commercial manufacturing and regulatory and direct them in the right direction. For instance, if needed we help them to make changes in the formulation very early to avoid problems with increasing batch sizes. Every customer is a priority for us, whether it is a small or a larger company seeking our services. We also have an excellent track record with our partners that is spread word of mouth, and this is what makes us special in the long-term.

We see that there are many partnerships in the CMO space. What opportunities do you see for collaboration and partnerships for Bioglan?

We have partnerships with clients and with universities. University and private sector collaborations are a very interesting concept. Sweden stands out for its innovation rate, where good ideas from academia can be utilized together with companies to facilitate product development. We are involved in this area together with other pharma companies, to encourage these movements. The cost for product development and clinical research is extremely high, so partnerships with academia and

company to company do make sense as the risk and the cost is shared. Internationally, we have several ongoing co-developments of products within Reig Jofre, which has three specialized sites in Spain devoted to freeze-dried products, and antibiotics derived from penicillin and cephalosporin.

We are partnering with local, European and international companies and we ship our products worldwide. Reig Jofre has a direct sales network in seven countries in Europe and the Middle East, plus a network of over 130 commercial partners in 70 countries.

With a strong Swedish heritage of more than 30 years for manufacturing and R&D, how critical is it for Bioglan to be based in Sweden?

From a strategic point of view, being located in the south of Sweden has proven to be an advantage. The Skåne region is great, with several pharma and Medtech companies having a huge footprint in the area. This means that there is a lot of life science expertise concentrated in this region.

I think we need to highlight the high level of manufacturing quality and eminent collaboration; which Sweden undoubtedly has. Internationally, products that are manufactured in Northern Europe such as in Sweden have a great reputation, so they can often be sold at a premium price in the market. Clients trust us and I think we need to spread the word about our trustfulness and the collaborative and innovative environment here in Sweden.

Do you have any expansion plans for your current site in Malmö?

Four years ago, we only ran one shift per day, but due to our growth; we are now working three shifts per day and have been doing it for the last three years. This is due to new clients, new products and growth with long lasting existing customers.

We have had three production lines since the 1990s, and now we have decided to install a fourth line that involved an investment of EUR 1 million, which is put in place currently and will be ready to run at the end of this year. This marks a big change for us, as the line will be used for a completely new product. The customer is moving its manufacturing operations from a larger UK contract manufacturer, which is 50 times of our size, to our facility here in Malmö. We are very proud to attract such assignment. It is the trust, openness and good collaboration that brings customers to Bioglan.

What do you want to reach in the next three to five years for Bioglan?

We have a contract business, that has been growing in Sweden for several years with certain lines running 24 hours five days a week, while other lines still have high potential to add new products. I would like to see more products to be developed and commercialized by us or by our partners. While we have a certain coverage for market commercialization through Reig Jofre in Europe, in other parts of the world we are looking for distribution partners. The products are mainly in the wound care, dermatitis, psoriasis and pain treatment indications, all within our area of expertise, which is semi-solid formulations. We look forward to growth with current customers and to welcome new ones. I would like to again double our revenue within the next five years.

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