

"Agilent will continue to develop need based innovative technologies"

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By : Rahul Koul - March 13, 2019



Headquartered in India at Manesar, the United States-based multi-national company, [Agilent](#) is a leader in life sciences, diagnostics and applied chemical markets. With close to 1,500 employees in the country, the company's Manesar facility is a global hub for finance, as well as housing life science labs using the latest chromatography, spectrometry and spectroscopy instruments. Agilent operates across India through offices located in Bangalore, Mumbai, New Delhi, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Chandigarh and Kolkata.

Agilent in India has won a number of awards including first place in IT-enabled services and Leadership development. In 2011, it was ranked number 11 in 'India's best companies to work for' survey.

In an exclusive interaction with the BioVoice's Rahul Koul, the Country Manager of Agilent India, Mr Bharat Bhardwaj, shared details on the company's latest initiatives, its performance in last few years and its continuous focus on innovation. Read on:



How has the Agilent's last two years been? Please take us through the key developments at the company? How has been the growth?

The last two years have been an exciting journey for the Agilent. We have been now getting into certain segments, which were earlier on the corner but are now at the centre-stage of our strategy. We acquired the company like Dako which has got us more into life sciences research and come up with certain acquisitions like consumables. We are able to now get into chemical standards which are also a key aspect of the customers' workflow.

We were able to provide excellent chromatograph, chromatography, columns, chemistry but what about the sample preparation stage and chemicals required at that time. And that is where we have been trying to address customer needs.

About 8 percent of our investment goes into research and development activities, which means there is a lot of excitement in terms of product development, workflow solutions, and acquisitions. The result is that the growth has been exceptional. Therefore, the company has been doing well globally and in India.



Bio-suppliers in India have been collaborating with the universities and setting up demo labs and training centres. Are you too looking at following the same at Agilent?

We always have had an exciting time with academia as we have been working with the majority of academic institutes across India. We may not set up a laboratory on their campuses but we are able to address the specific needs of customers from our Centres of Excellence. We are closely working with newly established Indian Institute of Technologies (IITs) and some of the advanced techniques have been offered to them while they come up with new ideas for scientific challenges.

We are also coming up with Agilent University in India where users can get trained and get certified for usage of our equipment. Looking at the wider spectrum of Agilent userbase, we not only impart instrumentation training but also look at what has happened at the pre-sample state and post sample state as well.

Agilent University may be new to India but it is already there in Singapore and China. The extension of the same is going to happen in India. You would really see that under our skill development program in India, the user group base is changing in India and it is helpful.



Will it be an academic university or just a knowledge-driven awareness initiative for target audience?

It is not an academic university but a platform with our training modules, looking not only at face to face interactions but employing digital means too. You don't have to always walk into a room for training but could avail the web-based audio and video modules.

We realized that sitting in 3-4 days in training rooms doesn't help really getting everything out of it. So we are looking at web-based training which I don't think anybody of our competitors is even close to offering. How we train our employees would be no different for user groups. That is the concept behind Agilent University.



What is your view on the business environment and regulations in Indian context?

I would say it has come a long way. If I look at the 3-4 years back, there was a lot of talk about it but it is last 2 years, we have seen tractions in some of the regulatory bodies such as FSSAI. Good to see the way they have revamped the platform. They are in an active mode not only for the general public point of view but the testing facilities.

I am very excited about it as today that the regulatory bodies, technical teams and companies like us are talking to each other. We have platforms where we introduce our technologies to them and they too are keen to work with us.

As an example, there are agencies such as AOIC which is a global platform for the food segment. When they want to train their user base, the Agilent arranges customized web seminars for them. This collaboration has evolved much and I feel this country can run better if regulators and companies talk to each other often. The ecosystem is changing and it's a good thing.



Are there any plans for 'Make in India'? What are the trends in the company?

I would say we have already invested much in India. We have 1,500 employees in the country. We may not be manufacturing in India but we have a global hub here. We have a huge campus at Manesar that we are expanding further. There are 1,000 employees at Manesar campus alone. The 40 percent workforce of the organization is technical and 20 percent is on the operations side.

As mentioned, 8 percent of revenue goes back into R&D every year and it is highest than any of the players operating in this market. Because we believe in innovation, we are focused on developing best in class products targeting customer needs. Since the last 12 years, we have been continuously innovating.

In gas chromatography (GC), we have highest market leadership. 7 out of 10 products are by

Agilent. We still decided to come up with new age GC. We have set the new benchmarks.



You have recently launched new gas chromatography systems and a UV- Vis system in the Indian market. Please share more details and tell us about the uniqueness of these latest products?

The new Agilent 8890 and 8860 GC systems extend the company's industry-leading portfolio of robust analytical instruments. They will incorporate innovative and intelligent 'self-aware' predictive technology, expanding their suite of smart-connected GC instruments. The Cary 3500 UV-Vis system is an innovative spectrophotometer designed to help life science, pharma and biopharma research communities simplify their analyses, optimize laboratory productivity, and ultimately help bring new therapeutics to market faster.

Earlier for temperature controlled experiments such as DNA melting or protein measurements, it used to be one temperature at a time. But here you can do multiple sets of measurements at a single time. That means you can have four pairs of experiments simultaneously.

In biopharma space, protein characterization is the most common experiment. Earlier they were doing it one by one but now they can do it in sequence. The workload generally is too much and it takes lot of time if you have to do it one by one. Now you can do the eight samples at one time. That is the uniqueness of the Carry 3500 UV Vis system.

The system is one of its kind and quite competitive. It has multi-cell and multi-temperature make. It was introduced on 1st November 2018 and so far two units have been sold in India.



What is your target for the total number of UV units to be sold during the current financial years?

We don't really focus on the numbers. The idea is to go for the customers where they require high throughput analysis and where the number of sample size is too much. They obviously don't want to compromise on accuracy. Plus all the pharma companies focus more on the cost of production.

Earlier, there was a lamp replacement every two years. But now there no such cost attached. The benefits to the customer are footprint reduction, increased productivity, better accuracy, and decreased cost of ownership. I am excited that it will go down well with the customers. Meanwhile, we will continue to innovate need-based technologies.



Are there any challenges in terms of how the clients react to new age digitally smart instruments?

It is an interesting question. It does take a while for the adoption of new technology to an optimal level. But I will look at it from the perspective of today's young generation users. They want simple and easy products. They are interested in knowing how we can tell them to prevent the problem before it happens and if it happens, they want to know how to quickly fix it. They of course are happy with these smart instruments.

At the same time, there are certain regulations that were set up and developed for previous generations. For the old generation users, it does take a while to catch up on the new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) but eventually they too like it as it makes their work easier.

We are global leaders in gas chromatography and the users have always responded quickly to the changes that were adopted from time to time. We are sure that regulators too will upgrade themselves as per requirements. I look at it, not as a challenge but as an opportunity.