

'We're expanding to Australia, Sri Lanka by 2012'

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Dr Biswajit Roy
CEO, Chromous Biotech

Chromous Biotech, which recorded revenues of ₹12 crore this year, was started in 2006 as a supplier of molecular biology products. It has since expanded into contract research and research and development of diagnostic kits. In an interview with BioSpectrum, Dr Biswajit Roy, CEO of Chromous Biotech, traces the company's journey so far and talks about the challenges faced by them.

What strategies did you adopt to counter multinational companies?

Q One of the biggest challenges we faced was the importance scientists placed on brand names that they have been using since their doctorate days. It has been a slow and tedious process, but we are now finally overcoming this problem. Brand establishment is a time-consuming process and there is no short-cut. The sales are directly proportional to the level of acceptance and by this estimate, we have achieved what other companies have, but in half the time. We are growing fast but there is a level of skepticism among scientists, which we hope to counter with time.

Tell us about your product range.

Q We focus on all products required for molecular biology experiments, which include biologically active enzymes and other non-perishable entities. We have developed a mutant, Taq polymerase, which reduces the time for a PCR reaction from two-to-three hours to 22 minutes, for which a patent is pending.

This has a broad range of applications in microbiology, molecular diagnostics and other forms of research. Also, we offer columns for DNA isolation at a fraction of the market price, allowing scientists to make their own solutions from material available in their labs, which reduces the cost from ₹300-400 to ₹100-150.

40 for a column.

How would you describe your client base?

Q Around 70 percent of our clients comprise scientists from government institutes, such as the NCBS, Bangalore, and NIO, Goa, and around 15 percent are from educational organizations. The rest are from private companies, such as Lupin, Astra Zeneca and Natco Pharma.

What strategies did you employ to set yourself apart from competitors?

Q We are the first in the biotech industry to introduce flexi systems in terms of quantity. Distributors tend to group large orders together for imports, which result in delays. We wanted to leverage the fact that we are an Indian molecular biology manufacturer and hence can avoid the problems of delays and high costs of shipment associated with other companies. People can order reagents according to their required quantities with us and be assured of a delivery within 24 hours of the order. Flexi packs have been very well received. They constitute around 60 percent of our product orders.

How spread out is your marketing network?

Q We have seven regional heads operating out of the major cities in India who are working with 53 distributors. We have marketing offices in the UK, and are starting offices in Australia and Sri Lanka by early 2012.

What are your future plans for the company?

Q We have observed that this market is very fragmented, hence we are trying to integrate all activities under one roof. We have just ventured into the plastics market. Also, we are starting a new range of low-technology basic laboratory instruments, such as sonicators, vortexes and gel electrophoresis units. These are being produced in India at plants certified by the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories.

They will offer tremendous cost advantage over their international counterparts. With this, we are widening our target market size to 500 crore and hope to achieve revenue target of 50 crore in the next three years. We have funds of a fund 3 crore under the Department of Biotechnology's Biotechnology Industry Partnership Programme and the DSIR for development of kits for malaria and tuberculosis.

Manasi Vaidya in Bangalore