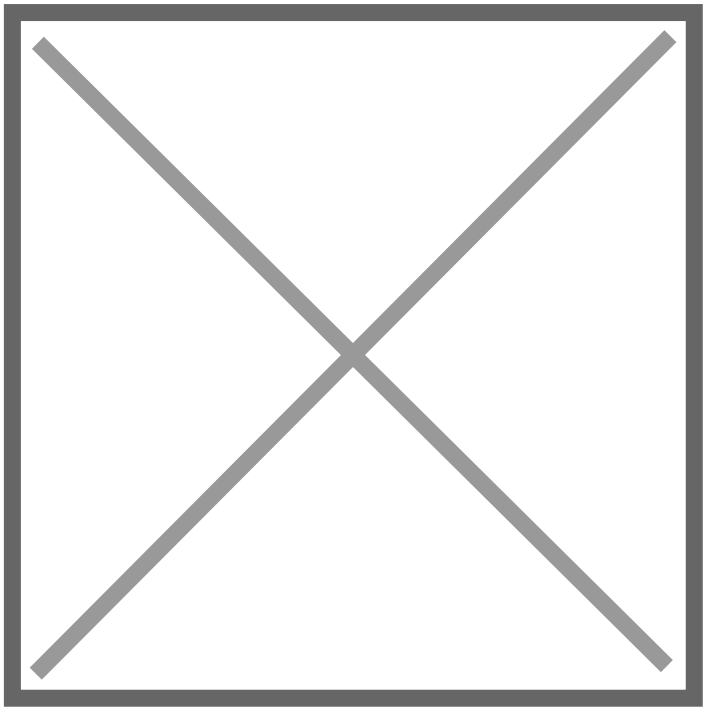
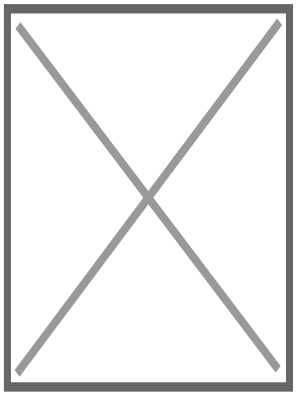
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'Manufacturing of lab reagents is our next target'

15 March 2011 | News





- Dr Ushakar Nag,
business manager, DSS Imagetech, New Delhi

QÂ Tell us about the growth of DSS Imagetech since its inception?

DSS Imagetech has grown significantly. From the microscopy solutions to life sciences business which was started in 2004, we went on to become the leaders in the microarray genomics system. From there we also moved to molecular diagnostics business in partnership with major companies such as Abbott Molecular and Dako.

Today, we consider ourselves as the single largest platform in India offering services in cancer diagnostics. DSS has now taken up the challenge to foray into the field of medical science with new medical division in partnership with Olympus Corporation.

Also, recently we received best sales and best distributor awards for 2010 from Dako. We are also proud recipients of the best customer services in Asia Pacific from Abbott. Therefore, we have come a long way since 2004.

QÂ What are the challenges faced by a distributor like DSS?

The main challenges include lack of quality manpower and grooming of leaders. I think that currently there is no national level association to represent us. Besides that, in the last five years, the increased corruption level at research institutes is bothering us. Even after the L1 shortlist, the tender process is not justified. It is a vicious cycle which keeps going on. This is seriously affecting the industry growth.

The institutes now demand five-year warranty and services for the instruments and that too after the negotiations.

QÂ How do you see the market with the recent takeovers of Indian biosuppliers by MNCs?

We cannot stop MNCs from coming into the country but we need to make ourselves valuable so that MNCs see the value and start joint ventures with us. With the entry of MNCs, we can rationalize the products in the market.

QÂ What is the revenue expectation for this financial year?

After having crossed the revenue figure of $19 million (88 crore) in FY 2009-10, we are expecting a huge growth to $28 million (125 crore) this time.

QÂ What are the future plans of your company?

We are going to reshape the field of molecular diagnostics. We are set to enter into manufacturing of very high-end molecular biology reagents. This will reshape our entire business as there are only few companies in this manufacturing segment. DSS has been selected as a JV by a major Japanese MNC, Takara Bio, to manufacture molecular biology reagents in India. The

new company known as DSS Takara Bio, will come into effect from April 1, 2011.

The JV is a milestone achievement for DSS and will take the company to a new dimension. It will also bring into India, the manufacturing technology of high-end molecular biology reagents thereby giving a competitive-edge to Indian biological research. Gathering strength in manufacturing - biomolecules/diagnostic applications, we want to be recognized all over the country.

QÂ What is lacking when it comes to finding talent in the biotechnology sector?

The quality of biotechnology taught in colleges is very poor. The lecturers who are teaching have never worked on a PCR machine. Therefore, the students are devoid of any practical knowledge. At the end of the day, the students who are paying hefty fees to study biotechnology are not getting their due and remain underpaid as compared to their counterparts in other industries. Therefore, it is important to make education more practical.

QÂ What is required for promoting growth of biosupplier and biotech industries?

The growth of biosupplier industry can be achieved by focusing on indigenous manufacturing of research consumables and instruments. Moreover, the biosuppliers should not be overburdened with the growth of biotech industry in India, which is still in an early phase. It will not grow overnight but I am highly optimistic about its future growth. We are fortunate to have the leadership that is doing its best to increase the interaction between research institutes and the private companies.

Rahul Koul in New Delhi