



Good Advice

Rabinder Buttar, Chair and CEO of ClinTec, shares her valuable knowledge, including how she hopes to transform the clinical trials industry

ICT: As a leading clinical research organisation, what advice would you give a start-up company?

Rabinder Buttar: With any start-up, you must be clear about your unique product or service to ensure that there is a growing market for it. You need to understand that you will be in it for the longer-term, as it takes time to build a reputable company and achieve brand recognition. Focus on providing a quality product and an efficient, reliable service to meet the specific needs of your target clients. Ensure that you develop a basic business and financial plan, including a cash flow. Finally, be prepared to work long hours and don't give up as there will be hurdles along the way.

How difficult do you think it is for a company to grow in the current economic climate?

I think if the company has an innovative product or service that is in demand, then it is not particularly difficult. Clients still want to consume and investors still want to make money. One of the main changes nowadays is that consumers and investors are more wary and are not prepared to take large risks as they did previously. There is still a market out there, but it has been refined.

Companies need to produce a quality product or service that costs less than before, and that is the challenge. It is in regions such as the Middle East and Africa that large numbers of patients can be successfully recruited quickly for trials, allowing pharmaceutical companies to complete development programmes quicker, and hence optimising their R&D budget and allowing quicker commercialisation.

ClinTec believes in transforming the clinical trials industry. How do you plan to do this?

Our company aims to be highly collaborative in nature, and is committed to forming strong bridges between our clients, different cultures, international operating environments, regulatory agencies and academia. This will contribute to greater overall productivity within the industry, and ultimately better outcomes for patients, through the nurturing of highly informed and globally aware talent within all these stakeholder communities.

What do you find most rewarding in your job?

That is a tough question because there are so many different aspects to the job of a CEO and each one is rewarding in its own way. ClinTec has been expanding its geographical reach immensely over the years and breaking into challenging markets

in the Middle East, Africa, and in Asian countries such as the Philippines and Thailand. It has been rewarding to learn and understand the local markets, gain an understanding of the local culture, and meet and develop ClinTec staff all over the world.

And the most challenging aspect?

Successfully breaking into untapped regions has been challenging. Having to work closely with, and educate, local regulatory bodies so they understand what is required from an international perspective can also be a challenge.

Where do you see the industry going in the next 10 years?

Healthcare will continue to be a growing sector and pharmaceutical companies will continue in their endeavours to bring innovative products to the market as cost-effectively and quickly as possible. There will be an emergence of many more new baby biotechs as pharmaceutical companies make larger efforts to drive innovation by funding new start-ups in early clinical development, in the hope of creating the next blockbusters. And orphan drugs and biosimilars will gain increasing importance.

The trend now is for Big Pharma to outsource to large CROs, creating preferred partnerships. I believe the trend will change over time as these partnerships are tested, and outsourcing will shift to mid-market CROs as preferred regional partners of Big Pharma. As the Middle East and Africa become more important for trials, the development of a clinical research talent pool is needed. Educating local researchers will be a vital task for CROs.

What makes ClinTec stand-out from its competitors?

We are the most geographically diverse, organically grown, mid-market sized CRO in the world. Our ability to flexibly align services in an innovative way with the needs of our clients in any country the client wishes to operate makes us stand out. Our clients view our platform and capabilities as a viable alternative to outsourcing to the large-cap global CRO community.



Dr Rabinder Buttar is CEO and Founder of ClinTec International. She holds a PhD in Immunology from the University of Strathclyde and was awarded Doctor of the University from the University of the West of Scotland in 2010 for her contribution to life sciences.