

A rookie's experience at Pharma ChemOutsourcing 2012

Linda Hugl of ChemOvation, a UK-based chemistry services provider, attended her first Pharma ChemOutsourcing conference in Long Branch, New Jersey, USA in September and reports on a highly satisfying and enjoyable experience.

“The whole trip has added poignancy following the arrival of Hurricane Sandy on the very shore of the meeting, along the coast I travelled on and into New York, which I visited afterwards. Long Branch was flooded but seems to have survived reasonably intact, thanks goodness.

It was my first trip to the USA, so very exciting, but I was disappointed to be on the wrong side of the plane as it flew into Newark. I had prepared maps of Long Branch and knew the way to the hotel from the train station, but definitely didn't know how far it was. The receptionist didn't really believe we had arrived on foot, dragging suitcases, having walked for over an hour!

The conference was an exciting mix of plenary discussions, workshops, exhibitions and private meetings, along with socialising in a very beautiful beach setting, in glorious weather. Many senior figures in Big Pharma outsourcing and smaller biotechs attended, as well as many service providers.

The 'King of the Conference' was undoubtedly organiser Mark Alexay, who greeted many of the delegates personally, having got to know them on previous visits

(that's repeat business for you). I was a bit surprised to be greeted myself by Mark, as it was my first trip, but reference to the number of meeting rooms I had been trying to book soon made it clear why I had impinged on his consciousness, but he didn't seem to bear any grudges!

Multiple customer meetings

The conference was recommended by one of our customers and instead of meeting just that one customer, I was able to meet many more potential customers. It was ChemOvation's first conference in a number of years and my first one ever in this role, so there was a certain amount of trepidation about it all, but also of wanting to make the most of the opportunity. Before my first meeting I was nervously going through the presentation and wishing I'd read my sales booklet on the plane instead of watching the in-flight movies!

I found the plenary sessions really interesting and the format of one or two key questions for each session, with five to ten minutes for each speaker, led to good interaction with the audience. The various

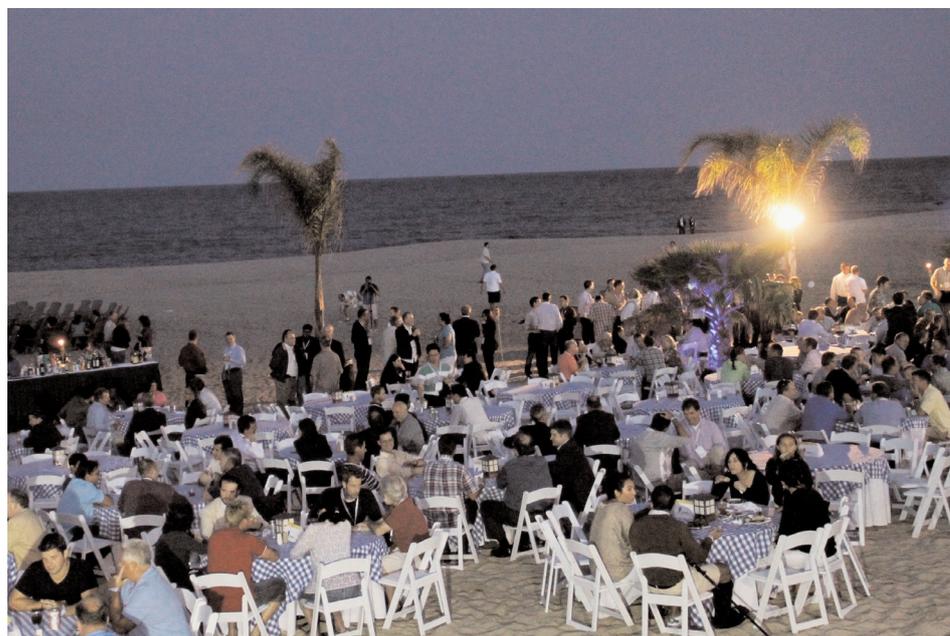
panels tackled questions about the factors considered when choosing outsourcing partners; the importance of location (or not); whether size matters; integrated services or stand-alone expertise; and more.

Of course there are many answers to each of those questions depending on circumstances, but I got the impression that there is a concern to bring more outsourcing work back to the USA, probably influenced by unemployment figures and the recently announced closure of the Roche site at Nutley, down the road from the venue. There was though, much praise for how effective collaborations with Indian and Chinese companies can be.

Communication, relationships, turnaround time, quality and price were unsurprisingly the key factors for choosing service providers, with varying importance at different stages of a project. Although many speakers told us that price is not the main determinant, some did admit to it being very important.

A big issue: risk- and reward-sharing

There were a few moments of controversy during one of the early sessions on Global Trends in Outsourcing, which played out a bit in subsequent sessions. One of the main speakers, from one of the multinationals, talked about the need for CROs to share the risk more with Big Pharma and how that could come about. One brave CEO of a small chemistry service provider responded with the call for reward-sharing to go with risk-sharing; he remonstrated that Big Pharma wanted high quality, low cost, delivery yesterday and now wanted to share the risk too! Another Big Pharma speaker from the floor came out fighting and suggested that CROs should be willing to take on these risks if they are as good as they claim, to perhaps a few gasps from the audience. The heat was taken out of the situation by someone else commenting that many compounds fail in Big Pharma, which has perhaps only a nine per cent success rate, so success isn't necessarily related to the CRO or anyone's ability. So, the



There were plenty of opportunities for networking and getting to know each other at Pharma ChemOutsourcing 2012. (Photo: Mark Alexay/Pharma ChemOutsourcing)

conference was off to an interesting start!

At the end of each panel session there was a bit of a dash to the stage by those of us wishing to engage the speakers in further conversation, which became more of a rush as the days went on, as more decided it was an OK thing to do. I had to decide which of the speakers I was most interested in leaving ChemOvation's details with before the end of each session, so I had to get as near to the front as possible. I think I managed to get right to the front just once! The panelists were actually very friendly and willing to give some time to everyone in the long queues, so I decided not to keep them too long, but was that the right thing to do to promote my company?? (Answers on a postcard please!)

Great event – must go next year!

There was also a huge presence from the various service providers with their large booths and multitude of freebies and it was interesting to chat with them. The task was how to find out how they were doing without giving too much away! I gained useful industry knowledge but probably not as much



The panel sessions provided some interesting and even controversial discussions!

(Photo: Mark Alexay/Pharma ChemOutsourcing)

as I would have liked – after all these were hardened professionals and I was the rookie. I picked up a very useful beach bag despite it being from a competitor, but didn't feel brave enough to pick up a beach towel to go with it! I did go swimming in the ocean though and it was exhilarating!

So, great meeting, lots of contacts to follow up on, and I'm looking forward to next year!"

Further information
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Further information about Pharma ChemOutsourcing can be found at
www.chemoutsourcing.com

Dynamic Outsourcing for Life Sciences

The 2nd **Dynamic** Outsourcing for Life Sciences event takes place from March 19-20, 2013 at Newmarket Racecourse Conference Centre, Newmarket (near Cambridge), UK, organised by avakado media in association with world-renowned outsourcing expert Dr David Ager.

This networking and conference-driven event will cover contract research, development and manufacturing of pharmaceutical and agrochemical intermediates and active ingredients from R&D to commercial scale. It will include keynote addresses on the state of the industry, discussion sessions on a wide range of chemistry outsourcing topics, and presentation sessions from CROs and CMOs on business and operational practices.

To participate at **DOLS 2013** as a keynote speaker, discussion session panelist or company presenter contact:

Tom Mulligan, Conference Director, avakado media.
Tel: +44 (0)1403 220755, Email: tom@avakado.eu

The events include a 2-day table-top exhibition for suppliers of technologies and services in the life sciences outsourcing sector. For further information on exhibiting contact:

Mark Harrington, Event Director, avakado media.
Tel: +44 (0)1403 220753, Email: mark@avakado.eu

We look forward to welcoming you to this exciting event next year.

