

The Future of the Life Sciences Industry



Regulatory affairs have been tightened up in recent times, resulting in a constant need to regulate professionals in various areas

Brian Christensen from Life Science Recruitment examines how the recent economic difficulties have affected the Life Sciences industry in Ireland

The Life Science industry in Ireland has weathered the economic storm relatively unscathed. A sweeping statement perhaps? But one we believe to be true. There are a number of points to be noted when assessing the current situation.

The Brain Drain

With 1,000 PhD's scheduled to graduate this year, are there jobs for these candidates? Currently, it seems, the answer is no. Reliable PhD employers like Wyeth/Pfizer have frozen recruitment due to the current merger. Recruitment has also slowed down in relation to PhD recruitment with Abbott. The overwhelming result is that more PhDs are staying in academia, and are not contributing ideas to industry. Many are seeking work in more buoyant markets and also outside mainstream science - in areas such as sales and marketing and

business consultancy. However, on the commercialization of research, there seems to be light at the end of the tunnel.

A 7.5 per cent increase in capital committed to start-ups in 2008 was

attractive and viable options out there for ambitious researchers who have pioneering technology to bring to market. Recent success stories include Cappella Medical Devices in Galway and Merrion Pharma in Dublin.

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noted, which was also 26 per cent up on 2006. Many of these start-ups are based around special incubation centres on university campuses like the Nova Centre in UCD and the Ignite Centre in Galway. The take-home message seems to be there are still

Governmental Plans

For those that suggest preparation is key, our governmental organisations would tend to agree, certainly judging by recent actions. The IDA and Enterprise Ireland (EI) in recent times have sourced planning application approvals

for two "plug and play" Biopharma campuses, one based in Galway and the other in Dundalk. This makes it easier for these bodies to attract potential clients, although the argument could be made for the apparent lack of potential new blockbuster drugs in the current global pipeline, which would warrant such sites. However, having these options ready to go means we are gearing up for the market to shift in the right direction, and positioning correctly for when new investments need to be made. Another issue on the horizon is how long can we keep hold of our magical 12.5 per cent corporate tax rate? Obama has made it clear that it is something he is not happy about, and the EU has sent signals to similar effect. This could have a hugely detrimental effect on all sectors of our economy were it to ultimately materialise.

Recent Industry Movements

There have been a number of new investments in the country this year, including the further development of the Athlone Medical Device hub, encompassing companies like Teleflex, Utah Medical, Abiomed, KCI Medical, Georgia Tech, as well as the clinical



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Job Areas to Focus On

On a more micro level, we have noticed a number of areas where job shortages seem to be present, at least from our viewpoint. As there has been a historical lack of biotech in this country, experience up - and downstream process engineers, as well as micro professionals with biotech experience, are strongly in demand. Regul-

a number of positions here. In Clinical Affairs, niche specialist roles like medical advisory and medical science liaison roles seems to be in constant demand.

Job Seeking

We have also examined how the web-savvy jobseeker who is on the lookout has adapted to these difficulties and market needs. According to our research, almost 70 per cent of people have started to use multiple resourcing techniques, such as direct searches on search engines as opposed to just job boards. There is also a trend toward a more niche-targeted jobseeker, with many opting for niche industry job sites and industry specialist portals, such as lifescience.ie. People are using social networks to connect and talk, which inevitably results in people finding jobs here too. LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter (to a lesser extent) are being embraced by the informed jobseeker. Google searches are becoming more popular as internet penetration continues to rise. In a market as tough as this, it pays to have a number of people who are taking a keen interest in any potential opportunities available, which these sites do perfectly.

We see this market as continuing to adapt as new and better technologies become available. We would describe the forecast for next year as being cautious but quietly optimistic, although it will very much be governed by decisions by the global players who have made the afore-mentioned market shifting moves.

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research organisation PPD. Other investments and expansions include worldwide manufacturers like Millipore in Cork and Merck Sharpe & Dohme in Carlow. This is encouraging when considering Ireland within the scheme of global markets; we are still an attractive place to invest. However, a number of questions still linger. The most pertinent of these would seem to be the fallout from Pfizer's purchase of Wyeth. As Wyeth has a number of high profile plants here in Ireland, it will be interesting how Pfizer judges them in the global context of their operations. The Grange Castle site would seem to be in good hands due

to its modernity, but the Newbridge site is 38 years old, so may not have a future quite so bright. Regulatory affairs have been tightened up in recent times, resulting in a constant need to regulate professionals in various areas. We are also noticed a lot of outsourcing in this area. There has been a lot of expansion in the Clinical Affairs / Clinical Research area. Larger companies like ICON and Quintiles are going strong, with numerous smaller companies making market gains with pioneering new technologies like electronic data capture (EDC). As EDC is something relatively new to the CRO market-place, companies are still coming to terms with the regulatory adjustments necessary to accommodate it, resulting in