



Silvia Baldina



Florian Weighardt



EVENTS

# Pharma ChemOutsourcing 2010

The meeting point of major players. A report.

SILVIA BALDINA, FLORIAN WEIGHARDT  
Chimica Oggi / Chemistry Today  
silvia@teknoscienze.com, florian@teknoscienze.com



Mark Alexay,  
President of Pharma  
ChemOutsourcing  
with his daughter

**C**himica Oggi/Chemistry Today participated as media-sponsor to the ChemOutsourcing 2010 Conference and Exhibition held in Long Branch, New Jersey, USA, in September 2010. The three days of conferences and exhibition were a history of success: the event was a unique opportunity to meet the major players of the sector and to definitively improve fruitful networking among them. Four contemporarily ongoing conferences were organized providing insight into the most straightforward and latest novelties in the sector. Several get-together social events, more than simple coffee breaks or dinners, provided plenty of occasions to get together and network in an uniquely easy and informal way.

Chimica Oggi/Chemistry Today had the great opportunity to interview Mark Alexay, President of Pharma ChemOutsourcing who explained to us the philosophy behind this and future events.

Mark Alexay began his career in the pharmaceutical industry as a marketing manager for Pfizer in the early 1990's. In the mid-90's he joined a start up conference company in New York and was charged with pioneering the pharmaceutical division. Among the many successful meetings organized were on chemistry and drug discovery.

Pharma ChemOutsourcing is the culmination of his 10 years of experience in organizing pharmaceutical chemistry and other conferences. Pharma ChemOutsourcing was launched in 2007. Mark holds a BA from Denison University in Ohio and an MIA (Master of International Affairs) with a focus on Business Administration from Columbia University in New York City.

Pharma ChemOutsourcing is the culmination of his 10 years of experience in organizing pharmaceutical chemistry and other conferences. Pharma ChemOutsourcing was launched in 2007. Mark holds a BA from Denison University in Ohio and an MIA (Master of International Affairs) with a focus on Business Administration from Columbia University in New York City.



**Q. The ChemOutsourcing Show have demonstrated to be a history of success. In the past 2 years it has emerged as a uniquely useful pharmaceutical industry-specific meeting. Which are on your opinion the most striking achievements of Chem Outsourcing?**

**A.** I think the major achievement is that most everyone returns, year after year. That really validates what we do and tells me that we are consistently attaining the high standards our clients expect. Very satisfying. For example, many of the speakers, attendees, and exhibitors have been attending regularly since 2007. More people attend each year as the show grows but the business strategy is to take care of existing clients first! I have a strong sense of loyalty to those who have supported the show and think that that sentiment goes both ways.

**Q. ChemOutsourcing offers a unique conference with over 100 speakers, from pharma and biotech companies mainly. Which are the major take-home messages which your event wants to provide to its attendees?**

**A.** We want to provide attendees both the best quality information and networking. The nightly beach and gaming events add an element of fun. Why shouldn't conference be fun? Attending any show means time away from the office and family – there better be a very good reason! It is a challenging task to organize the show so that the sessions are truly useful. But the industry is changing so fast that there are plenty of new areas to cover every year. It is equally challenging to design the networking functions – we have to get inside the heads of attendees and try to make them feel



very comfortable at the event. This way it's easier to meet new people. The relatively small size of the show permits a level of intimacy that everyone enjoys. The attendees know what they want. It's my job to facilitate their goals.

**Q. Why should someone attend the ChemOutsourcing show?**

**A.** I think Pharma ChemOutsourcing really fills a niche – pharmaceutical chemistry sourcing and related technology – that's it. The goal is that we stay true to this market and deliver high quality every time.

**Q. Who is mainly attending the Show? Who is the typical ChemOutsourcing attendee?**

**A.** Most attendees are chemists from pharmaceutical and small molecule biotech companies who are mid-career or higher – they often hold Ph.D.'s. The same can be said of the suppliers. They are technically trained but have moved into the business development and sourcing areas.

The audience is worldwide which reflects the newly globalized supply chain and drug discovery efforts. We desperately need new drugs and it looks like the next round of blockbusters will take a global effort to be successful. China and India will likely be part of this effort but I am personally encouraged by the hundreds of small and medium sized pharmaceutical companies in the United States that are working successfully to discover new molecules. For me, their emergence as a real industry drug discovery driver is the most remarkable event I have witnessed over the past 10 years in our industry.

**Q. Which are the numbers of this year's Event?**

**A.** Pharma ChemOutsourcing was launched in 2007, but before it I used to organize a similar, though much lower profile, event. About 850 people attended the September 2010 show which is up about 15% from 2009. The majority are from the USA but increasingly we are drawing from elsewhere, too. Attendees from a dozen European countries attend, more Japanese are coming, and so are the Canadians. There may have been a slight decrease in attendees from other Asian countries in 2010. 2010 was a tough year and it seems that the US economic crisis was felt most acutely in 2010.

**Q. You provide plenty of occasion to get together and to make contacts and to discuss. Did you get feedbacks of your attendees on whether they succeeded in making business thanks to your symposia? Does this feedback allow you to evolve and better focalize future symposia?**

**A.** Yes! Feedback is crucial and today's web-based technologies, like email, make it possible to stay in close contact with hundreds, even thousands of people. Many people offer suggestions and are aware that we act on them. There are so many solid ideas that will go into making 2011's show better. For example attendees asked for an online pre-show networking tool. We were able to make that available in 2010. We sought as much user input as possible and people were incredibly forthcoming about how to make it more useful for you. This input will be reflected in the far superior 2011 tool. My webmasters are working on making those upgrades right now. When people need it beginning in March, it will be ready for them.

**Q. The Symposium is organised to focus on very specific topics of interest. How do you select the hot topics for your conferences? How do you set up the schedule of the Event?**

**A.** After many years of organizing ChemOutsourcing and other pharmaceutical chemistry meetings, it becomes easier to spot hot topics as they emerge. But importantly we ask for input all the time and we listen and act on what attendees tell us.



We don't have a formal advisory committee – that would place the content of the show in too few hands – we have something better – actionable input from hundreds of attendees. I think the word is out that we listen carefully and attendees are confident their input will not be in vain. And it shouldn't be – after all, the show is for their benefit, not ours!

**Q. Did the crisis touch the sector of outsourcing? Which are the perspectives and will the next Symposium discuss this?**

**A.** The economic crisis was more noticeable in 2010 than last year. Many more attendees have changed employers than usual. Personally I am more concerned with the overall health of the pharmaceutical economy. There are many challenges on the horizon. The challenge of discovering, developing, and paying for new medicines concerns me. The pharmaceutical industry has done a wonderful job providing the world with good drugs for many diseases. But patents expire and innovation does not occur predictably. The pressure is on to find the next generation of breakthrough drugs. Certainly it will happen but we do not know when. This makes the industry a tough business despite its recent successes. And the industry is politicized everywhere. I hope we do not kill the golden goose by overemphasizing short term goals.

**Q. Very often a crisis brings with it great opportunities for novel developments and for radical changes. What do you think about this?**

**A.** Yes times of crisis spawn rapid change and I think we are seeing that in the frenzied pace that the industry is evolving. I am amazed by the speed with which the pharmaceutical and chemical industries are globalizing. We really live in incredible times. The advent of the Internet, the evolving technological tool box, our growing understanding of molecular biology, physics, and synthetic chemistry is unbelievable. The fast accelerating pace of knowledge and achievement is unique in our human history... It's an exciting time to be alive!

**Q. Which future plans do you have?**

**A.** Plans for the future? The 2011 event is going to be very different topic-wise. The rapid globalization of our industry demands it. It had better be good or we'll lose the trust we have earned. It's that simple – you're only as good as your last event!! ■