

# Good listener



CARBOGEN AMCIS believes that a key differentiator in the competitive CMO space is being able to create solutions tailored to customers' diverse technical problems. This explains why CEO Mark Griffiths spends as much time with clients as he does with his own staff.



Mark Griffiths  
CEO

**Q. What major changes are taking place in the pharmaceutical market and what impact do these have on service providers like CARBOGEN AMCIS?**

Clearly, there's a significant amount of restructuring and many large pharma companies are getting out of manufacturing and outsourcing that work eastwards to reduce costs. That has put the emphasis on pharma companies getting access to reliable suppliers that can meet their early development and manufacturing needs. Service

providers have to be smart and focused in how they address this new opportunity. Through the Dishman Group, our parent company, CARBOGEN AMCIS has very significant presence in Asia. Otherwise we'd also be competing with Indian and Chinese companies.

**Q. What factors differentiate CARBOGEN AMCIS from other companies in this fiercely competitive market?**

A. The company's best assets are its people. I've worked for a number of businesses in both the big pharma and CMO space and I can say that the quality of our people is exemplary, not just in terms of technical capability but also their range of experience and knowledge. We couple this strength with high-quality infrastructure, technology and capabilities to solve customers' problems. That translates, in turn, into an exemplary service.

We have a long history and tradition as service provider for the pharmaceutical industry. CarboGEN was founded by one professor of the University of Zurich. His strategy was to employ very bright PhDs to tackle chemical problems. We still maintain that philosophy today. The AMCIS side of the business, a joint venture with a US pharmaceutical company, was focused on niche-scale manufacturing.

The fusion of CarboGEN and AMCIS in the early 2000s was a natural fit. There was the early-phase high-technology focus and also the capability to take products through to market. In 2006 Dishman acquired CARBOGEN AMCIS, allowing the company to extend its reach up to the commercial level.

**Q. Tell us about a customer case study and how that demonstrated CARBOGEN AMCIS' philosophy**

A. One of our customers, a small US biotech company, acquired and modified an old product manufactured in the former East Germany with the aim of using it for new indications in oncology. Despite the lack of analytical data and information about the

chemical process, we took the product into Switzerland, optimising the process and doing a full tech transfer in an 18-month period. In 2008, the product was subject to a PAI and it is now a commercial product.

In that process, the small biotech licensed the product out to a mid-sized East Coast US pharmaceutical company, so there was a change in customer. That brought the challenge of understanding the new client's focus for the product compared with the biotech's. Importantly, we maintained the same technical team on the project right through the lifecycle of the product to retain the technical expertise associated with the process. This means the customer doesn't lose any knowledge or time.

**Q. As CARBOGEN AMCIS' new CEO, what tasks are at the top of your to-do list?**

A. At the moment I'm ensuring that we tick off all of our fixed costs as early as possible in the financial year and also maintain our competitiveness in the market. I spend about half of my time with CARBOGEN AMCIS' people and the other half with customers. We're a fairly small company but we are very focused on our key accounts. In fact, I maintain executive sponsorship on a number of those accounts. Our customers have direct access to the highest levels of leadership in our organisation. In this way we build trust and confidence.

**Q. What is the company's strategy over the coming years?**

A. CARBOGEN AMCIS has always had a reputation for investing in technologies: essentially tools to solve problems. To give one example, since 2002, CARBOGEN AMCIS has been very focused on oncology and highly-potent material. More than 30% of drugs in development are targeted at oncology and a large proportion of those involve highly-potent cytotoxic materials. These need special handling.

So in 2002, we kicked off our API and potent-handling capability and it's developed quite rapidly since then. We've spent in excess of \$40 million across the entire Dishman Group on highly-potent capability. I see that as a significant area of further investment for us.

We've also invested in drug-in-capsule capability for highly potents to take the customer not just to the API stage but also to the initial clinical trial drug dosage form.

**Q. What final message would you give to pharma representatives at CPhI?**

A. For us the critical issue is listening to our customers and trying to understand how we can create solutions that add value to their development programmes or the relationship in general. That's the key issue for CMOs these days. If a customer says it needs something you've got to act pretty quickly. Otherwise someone else will.