“Foreign markets are very important to us”

An interview with Olaf Sauerbier, CEO of Voco GmbH, Cuxhaven, Germany

The company Voco based in Cuxhaven at the northern coast of Germany is an established international provider of high-quality dental materials. Amongst products for restorative dentistry, they also offer a wide range of materials and preparations in the field of prosthetics and prophylaxis. Dental Tribune Group Editor Daniel Zimmermann talked with Olaf Sauerbier, CEO for Marketing and Sales, about new products and aesthetic trends in restorative dentistry.

Daniel Zimmermann: The Association of Dental Dealers in Europe (ADDIE) has recently predicted growth rates above 5 per cent for most European dental markets. Do you see any signs of recovery in your company? Olaf Sauerbier: To be honest with you, the recession never really caught us. We usually tend to perform slightly better than the overall market and expect to be no different for this business year. The year 2010 has started off better than last year ended and we have seen some significant growth in most of our business segments in Q1/Q2.

Although we have invested significantly in our German businesses by extending our sales team by 15 new employees, foreign markets are very important to us. At the moment, we are expanding our existing businesses worldwide, especially in North America. It will take a while before we are able to take full advantage of the enormous potential this market has to offer.

Did the products you introduced two years ago at IDS Cologne meet your expectations? The most important product we introduced at IDS in terms of sales was definitely the non-oozing, non-dripping NDT syringe. This new delivery form helped us to levitate sales of most of our highly flowable materials like Grandio Flow, Grandio Seal or Ionoseal.

Our gingiva-shaded restoration system Amaris Gingiva has also shown a good performance. We have to admit that the market for such a product is still small but, on the other hand, we see the demand for aesthetic restorations of exposed necks of teeth increasing due to demographic changes and people getting older. Those who have highly aesthetic requirements will find it hard to pass by this product.

Another bestseller has been the one-component light-curing nano-reinforced self-etch bond Futurabond M that we launched in SingleDose and in a 3-bottle value pack. Not to forget the Rebilda Post System, an awarded complete set for post-endodontic treatment for placing 15 posts, that has been sold successfully in Germany and abroad within a short amount of time.

There are some segments in dentistry, in particular dental implants, that are struggling with decreasing sales. How is the situation in the market segments you are involved in? The recession might have had devastating effects on companies offering upscale materials and equipment but the situation in restorative and preventative dentistry is looking much more promising. In the sectors we are

[Image of Olaf Sauerbier, CEO of Voco GmbH]

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What trends do you see impacting the industry at the moment? All manufacturers are striving for a product that offers almost ideal properties for a filling material and exhibits the same physical properties as natural tooth substance. All our competitors are developing towards this ideal but I see us quite ahead. We have been working with nanotechnology since the early 2000s and launched our first nano-hybrid composite Grandio already in 2003. This product is still in high demand in Germany and many other markets.

When and where will it be available? It is already available in Germany and other selected European markets. Like its predecessor, Grandio®SO is now able to present another nano-hybrid composite to the dental community that has outperformed our original expectations. Taking all its physical properties into account, it is probably the most dentin-like material on the market.

Do aesthetics play a more prominent role in the development of a composite? The primary goal is function. There is a place for aesthetics, too, but it must not compromise function or the stability of the filling. There are different points of view in dentistry regarding this matter right now but for us the primary goal cannot be highly opaque teeth that might be currently en vogue among Hollywood stars. In the US, for example, we found that dentists were using the white opaque shade of our flowable composite Grandio Flow for anterior restorations as this is usually the shade that most strongly bleached teeth have over there. Normally, we recommend it to be only used to whiten dark spots or in the case dentists absolutely need an opaque layer.

However, this is not the direction we want to go. Teeth have a natural translucency and we want to keep it that way. I believe with our current portfolio we can offer dentists a good solution to achieve long-lasting and natural aesthetic restorations alike.

Some European companies are developing specifically for the North American market. Is it the same with you? We sell exactly the same products in North America as we sell in Europe. Usually, most products are launched there six months after the have been put on the European markets. The only difference is the type of shades. In Germany, for example, the majority of dentists uses A3.5 which does not play any significant role in markets like the US where A2 is more common.

Will Grandio®SO be the main focus of your presentation at IDS next year and are you planning to introduce more products? Grandio®SO will be indeed the main focus of our IDS presentation but there are certainly other products that we intend to launch there. You will have to come to the show and see for yourself.

Olaf Sauerbier talks to DTI

Grandio SO will be the focus for 2011