



Dr Barbara Paldus

CEO & co-founder,
Finesse Solutions Inc.

‘We are very serious about entering the Indian market’

Launched in 2005, Finesse Solutions is a California-based bioprocess management solutions company which has an increasing presence in Singapore, Korea, China and Latin America and is now eyeing the Indian market. On her recent visit to India, BioSpectrum caught up with Dr Paldus and Mr Uday Ulhe, Consultant – Business Development – SE Asia, Finesse, to discuss about the company’s product pipeline and plans for Indian market. Excerpts:

Q *Please tell us about Finesse, its business area and product offerings.*

A **Dr Paldus:** Finesse makes measurement and automation solutions which means we manufacture and design both the biosensors for bioprocessing as well as for the automation system in bioprocessing. We have done that in the upstream for cell culture and fermentation for about 10 years now and we have recently developed our very own glass bioreactors and rocker bioreactors. We will be launching our single use 3L plastic bioreactor at the end of this year so that we can also offer

full lab scale solutions. We partner with all the major single use bioreactor vendors like GE, Thermo Fischer Scientific, Merck Millipore and ATMI on automating their bioreactors for end users. We create and provide single use sensors for their bioreactors as well.

Where we are going into our roadmap is we have made this universal controller for the upstream, now we will be making the controllers for downstream. So early next year we will be launching universal controllers for automation imaging filtration systems which will again be compatible

with filters from Millipore, GE, etc and eventually we will move onto the chromatography automation as well.

Q *What is the purpose of this visit?*

A **Dr Paldus:** The purpose of this visit is to really open up the Indian market. We have been looking at expanding in the Indian market for about five years now. This is our first official position in India. We are very keen because we believe the Indian market recognizes the single use and the importance of automation for robust and repeatable processes. The market is now ready for the kind of products that we offer.

By the end of this year we will have an office in Pune and will be looking to grow our Indian operation. We did this in China two years ago when we started. We have four people in China and the office is growing. We now that the Indian market is ready, we would like to do the same here.

Q *What are the challenges that you are facing in establishing an office in India?*

A **Dr Paldus:** The first challenge is to establish a branch office in India, our lawyers are working towards that; it needs major administrative work. We are working on the legal aspects of that. Next would be to find an office and finally to recruit good people. Emerson which has an automation platform that we use (Delta-V program, has a large developmental center in Pune. One of the benefits of having an office in India is that we will be able to find service engineers.

Q *How are your products different from your competitors? Are they affordable for small and medium size companies?*

A **Dr Paldus:** Our products are priced competitively, may be plus or minus 20 percent than our competitors. From a feature set, however, we have some unique features that our competitors don't offer. Since we have developed our own smart parts and those are electronic microcontrollers for the fundamental actuators in a process, for example mass flow control for gas and the pump control, we have a dynamic range and a precision that is much higher than our competition, so that means we can much more accurately deliver the mass transfer and since our sensors are single use they are much more accurate. It can then also measure the control loop that we can create. It is significantly tighter and is continuous. A lot of people have non-continuous pumps so they get bolus that's a shock to the cells in the bioreactors, we continuously dose or micro dose.

The other thing we can do is Gravimetric feeding and in order to reduce the cost of the system we have created a

software that can interleave four containers of one scale which saves time and money. It's a combination of better measurements and better actuators like pumps and pinch valves at a low price point so that our customers can optimize the process.

Q *How will your products fit into the price sensitive Indian market?*

A **Dr Paldus:** Our products can be competitively priced. We have already done that in China, Singapore and Korea. Our products are based on Emerson's Delta-V platform, which is very robust. We are actively working with Emerson to allow a cost structure that will be beneficial for the Indian market. Emerson is really established in India, and it has a good understanding of the price and needs for the Indian market and we are working with them to find a good solution for this market.

Q *How do you look at the Indian market for your products?*

A **Dr Paldus:** We see the market that is young and new but has the potential to be one of the largest markets in APAC. We are very serious about entering the Indian market. Earlier, there were different ways of approaching bioprocessing in India and we believe those approaches are now converging to the approaches where our solutions can be beneficial for customers.

Q *What are your plans for the Indian market?*

A **Dr Paldus:** We would like to actually support and help our users create smart factories. Finesse can provide flexible and configurable platforms for setting up seamless production facility so that the customers can build the facilities. The customers can build the facility at roughly one-tenth of the cost involved in a traditional facility. So our goal is to enable a paradigm shift in biological production in India through this smart factory platform.

Q *In what other locations is Finesse present?*

A **Dr Paldus:** All our software development is done in Leicester, the UK. We also have an office in Boston where we do service and project management work. We are actively expanding in China, where we have a full service center. We serve other parts of the APAC region from our office in China. Our goal is to see what kind of technology we can develop here in India because the country has very strong engineering resources so we would like to see what kind of services we can collaboratively develop here. **BS**

AYESHA SIDDIQUI