

Process expertise, investment protection & optimised solutions



The pharmaceutical industry is facing a number of significant challenges, including increased competition, new ingredients and digitalisation. In an interview, Thomas Hofmaier, global head of process technology pharma at Glatt, discusses the latest trends in solids production and how to overcome challenges.

Q: What are the latest trends in pharma production?

Hofmaier: Global trends differ significantly depending on the region or country. That's why, at Glatt, we try to position ourselves as flexibly and broadly as possible. We are driven by our customers' project requirements. Take, for example, the trend towards manufacturing drugs in increasingly smaller quantities, which is indisputable. We are also seeing increased demand for cost-optimised production processes for large production outputs. Our all-round expertise enables us to offer optimised solutions that are precisely tailored to customers' specific project requirements.

Q: What impact is the need to control costs having on your business?

Hofmaier: We are also feeling the pinch. However, this has less to do with demands for discounts and far more about the desire to increase system efficiency. We offer solutions for this as part of our portfolio and recently introduced a new tablet coater that is up to 30% faster than other coating processes. Glatt can help to optimise processes while rendering investments more effective. For customers without any export experience, we can also provide support in terms of registration, packaging and storage for the European area.

Q: What kinds of services do pharma manufacturers expect from their equipment suppliers?

Hofmaier: In every country, it is difficult to find qualified workers. This may be due to a lack of adequate training or that specialists are simply lacking in

certain markets. This makes it essential for operating systems to be easy to use, reliable and error-free. In case of frequent staff turnover, a short training period can be a significant performance factor in the production process. Our digitalisation solutions can also provide assistance in this regard, helping to guide users when working with the systems.

Today's pharmaceutical industry also expects suppliers to be able to provide rapid service worldwide. With our global sites and partners like Reitech SA in South Africa, we are able to help reduce or even prevent downtime. We are also introducing a new retrofit service to bring older systems in line with the state-of-the-art ones in terms of technology and safety, ultimately protecting investments.

Q: Has supplier responsibility increased over the course of a system's life cycle?

Hofmaier: Absolutely. I've seen a general trend in projects where operators and system integrators rely even more on the expertise of the supplier. Previously, the equipment provided with the system was specified to a large extent by the customer - now, we're given a lot more freedom. Combined with our process expertise, this enables us to create and offer superior solutions. We can also harness the experience of our colleagues at Glatt Ingenieurtechnik as well as our Excellence United partners.

Q: What are the latest developments in continuous manufacturing?

Hofmaier: Although continuous production is a hot topic, there's been quite a bit of hesitation up to now given this kind of production would require

significantly newer approaches. Our modular Modcos system enables Glatt to configure the right system for every customer, so that we can cater to different requirements. This flexibility has been met with great interest by many of our customers and we have already supplied a number of systems. However

“We are also introducing a new retrofit service to bring older systems in line”

- and we've been saying this for two decades now - continuous production is not necessarily the panacea for the pharmaceutical industry. We will continue to stick with the batch process and are working intensively on developing and optimising batch machines and systems.

Q: What new products and solutions will you be introducing this year?

Hofmaier: We are introducing the fastest coater in the world and additional modules as part of our expandable Multilab laboratory system. This includes a mixer module and a Twin Pro module. The latter will enable the development of containment applications, while continuous production will remain an important topic. To this end, Glatt will continue to focus on ensuring the efficiency of both its batch and continuous applications. •

*This interview is adapted from an original article written by Armin Scheuermann and published in the April 2020 edition of *Pharma+Food*

Glatt - www.glatt.com
Reitech SA - www.reitech.co.za