

Fig. 1



Innovate, educate, inspire

At the Dentsply Sirona World 2018 in Orlando, USA, Georg Isbaner, editorial manager of *implants*, had the chance to talk to Don Casey, CEO of Dentsply Sirona, about current challenges, future perspectives and newest product developments, like the newly launched Azeno.

Mr Casey, you took over the leadership of Dentsply Sirona in February 2018. In the last couple of years Dentsply Sirona made huge acquisitions on the dental market and became one of the leading dental companies in the world. However, the competition is strong. What are the biggest challenges and how do you address these challenges?

Right now, our challenges are almost more internal than external. We are still in the process of bringing all the Dentsply and Sirona teams together. Going from still thinking as two organisations to getting it merged into one focused organisation, is mainly what we have been doing right now. I have been here seven months and when I came here initially, I said, the most important thing to do, is to grow and now seven months later I am still saying, the most important thing we should do, is to grow. I have a lot more clarity now in terms of how we grow. In my mind the two biggest areas of growth for us are new products, as well as getting our commercial organisation more focused on acting as one organisation.

There are significant competitors on the market. Ultimately our competitors are also helping to improve the

practice of dentistry—thus the level rises. Having good competitors, makes you better.

You have a strong background in the healthcare industry. How does your experience and knowledge apply to your job at Dentsply Sirona?

I have been doing healthcare for 34 years. The interesting thing is, there is a couple of things that have always been consistent whether you are working in vision care, interventional cardiology or diabetes. Firstly, innovation is critical and how to focus on the customer needs and deliver innovation.

The second is globalisation. I have spent my whole life working at global companies, and we have more than 70 per cent of our employees, as well as of our revenues coming from outside of the US. Realising that the whole world does not look like, e.g. Florida (where we are right now), is very important. Thinking about a customer in a developing market like Thailand, is very different than about an established dentist in Germany. And even though Germany and France border each other, the French dentist's practice is extremely different to the German. So, understanding how you globalise things, is essential.

In all parts of healthcare, I have worked in, the KOLs are critical. The relationship with these thought leaders is absolutely essential, because they are the people that are going to challenge our thinking—whether it is somebody inventing something in cardiology or in molecular diagnostics, the KOLs are important. So how I look at



Fig. 2

Fig. 1: Dental professionals at the Dentsply Sirona World 2018 in Orlando, USA, could profit of up to 200 breakout sessions. **Fig. 2:** Don Casey, CEO of Dentsply Sirona and Georg Isbaner, editorial manager of *implants*, at the Dentsply Sirona World.

it, innovation, globalisation and KOL management—it is the same.

There are a lot of interesting things about dentistry, that are different than in general healthcare. If you look at the degree of specialisation in dentistry, it is not as high as it is in other industries. If you take eye care for example there are ophthalmologists, optometrists and opticians in every country in the world. Whereas in dentistry you will find oral surgeons but not every country has specialised endodontists, not every country has hygienists or people that do nothing but orthodontics. So, the degree of specialisation is a little different in dentistry globally than what you might see in other parts of healthcare.

Here in Orlando, Dentsply Sirona is welcoming more than 4,500 participants mainly from the US but also from many other countries including Germany. You even have a Dentsply Sirona Oktoberfest. How big is the “German identity”—if there is such a thing—in your company and what might it stand for?

I have said that multiple times publicly, I will say it again: I actually think we are a German company. A lot of our really big franchises come from Germany or the D-A-CH region—if you throw in endodontics for example, which is located in Ballaigues, Switzerland. There is a huge concentration of our big businesses coming out of this region. In Bensheim, Germany, I have now been able to do two big town hall events which we call “Under the roof” and I always refer to Bensheim as the capital of dentistry for the world, because if you think about digital dentistry, whether it is the imaging business or the CAD/CAM business it came from Germany.

We tend to think that one of the crown jewels of our entire enterprise is the fact, that we have a strong Ger-

man heritage—whether it is the engineering, the intimacy with the customers or the fact that we just built a tremendous clinical training centre in Bensheim. The latter shows our commitment to that market: we would like to have 10,000 dental professionals per year do a training in Bensheim, so they think of Dentsply Sirona as their home town company.

“Our recipe at Dentsply Sirona is going to be: talk to the KOLs, make sure we are developing great products and educate the dental professionals to use them.”

What is the main focus of the Dentsply Sirona World 2018 event?

Dentsply Sirona has a couple of different important goals. The first is, the opportunity to launch new products. I am adamant about Dentsply Sirona being the innovation leader in all dentistry over the next decade. We are launching nine new products over the four days here. It is a great opportunity for us to launch something where there is a great number of dental professionals. So, innovation is the first big thing.

The second is clinical education. We have over 100 experts here doing 200 breakout sessions, so the level of clinical education of this event is unsurpassed, compared to any kind of trade event that we have seen. We are go-

ing to continue building on that as an important heritage, because our recipe at Dentsply Sirona is going to be: talk to the KOLs, make sure we are developing great products and educate the dental professionals to use them.

Another focus, to be honest, is having some fun with our customers. They work hard and they look at this event as an opportunity to improve their practice and the way they approach things clinically. They can learn about five to six new products and it is actually a great opportunity for them to purchase products—there is usually some good incentives to do that. If they leave this event reinvigorated to be great dentists, we think that is terrific.

Looking at your portfolio, it does provide such “single items” as scanners, dental chairs, CEREC systems, implants, etc. How do you turn products into solutions, as your claim “the dental solutions company” implies?

The biggest opportunity we have about innovation and delivering on solutions, is to put the customer in the centre. Sometimes you have a product line and the product has been thought out, but actually the customer has to be put in the middle first—like in backward planning. Instead of inventing a product and then checking who wants to buy it, the customers should first be asked the questions “How can we help you?” and “What procedures are you doing in your office?”. A great example is our product Azento that we are launching today, which is a single tooth replacement. It is a classic example of thinking in procedures and not in single products. It is not about selling only an abutment, but also about provid-

ing the digital planning for the customer. Dentsply Sirona will literally take him or her through the five or six steps needed to actually have a perfect procedure. In my mind that is the way for successful future innovations.

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Right now, Azento is only released for the US market, but it will be presented internationally at the IDS 2019. You can combine it with our imaging equipment, CAD/CAM equipment, implant systems and you can put together a digital treatment. The predictable clinical outcome is going to be better, the doctor’s confidence is going to be significantly higher and that is how we deliver on solutions.

If we look out at the next couple of years, there is ten to twelve procedures that are critical across all dentistry. I am really grateful, that our R&D has realised that when thinking about a new tooth replacement, the innovation is not a new enamel but how to improve procedures. That is how we think about it.

So, instead of thinking about the investment, the dentists think of the solution that is offered for the challenges



Fig. 3: Introduction of the newly launched Azento™ system.

they are facing in daily practice. Many single dentist practices do not really have the time to create a treatment plan to do an implant, so what we can do with Azento, is to give them an unbelievably sophisticated programming tool that will help plan the abutment, plan the implant—looking at every angle—and it is all delivered in one package. We think, that will deliver a significantly better patient outcome.

Implantology belongs to the driving forces behind dental innovations. Dentsply Sirona owns some of the most established implant systems in the world. How important is implantology for the future of dental care?

If you were to ask, what are the two biggest trends in dentistry, I would say cosmetic is one of them and if you think about clear aligners as an example of really delivering a new benefit into the adult market, it has been done very well.

And then I would actually argue, that the implant category should be a significant grower just based on demographics. We used to think that 60, 70 or 80 was very close to the end, now in the US alone we are going to have 25 million 80-year-olds in 2020—just think how many teeth they will need. In Japan, we are seeing a great initiative called 80/20, where they want to achieve 20 teeth among all the 80-year-olds by 2020—it is just a great way to help dentists think about that. A lot of that development will fall to the implantologists, they will really have a tremendous opportunity to engage with patients in a much more holistic way and further there is going to be more patients. So yes, it is all about implants.

We have a lot of runway in front of us, especially with the technology and equipment side—penetration to CAD/CAM is probably half as high today as it will be in the next five to seven years. If you look at the access people will have to simple tooth replacement because of the sophisticated imaging that is now available, it is going to be a very hot growth area. Also, general dentists will be able to do some of those procedures.

When talking about the future of oral health in general, what challenges, changes and chances lie ahead of us?

Governments have to decide, how much they want to invest in preventive oral health as a way of enhancing overall health, as well as basic dental hygiene. There has not been much uniformness in the countries around the world that are approaching this issue. The data that I have been seeing from longer term clinical studies absolutely show that if you improve the overall oral health of a population, you will see benefits five to seven years later, because oral health is a predictor of general health.

The reimbursement paradigms particularly in Europe about how we should approach prevention and really improve our overall oral health are going to be critical. I think it is a great investment for governments to make and if the governments are not investing as much, we have to start thinking about how we can collectively do so as an eco-system. Whether it's the manufacturers, the media or the practitioners, we really have to educate the public that prevention is a very inexpensive way of preventing much more expensive outcomes later.

I am really optimistic about the technologies we are bringing out and that we can help do an even better job of clinically educating dental professionals. I expect this to be the next big change in the amount of oral healthcare expenditures that will be seen globally. If the governments figure that out and step up—great. If they do not, we are going to have to do the job of educating the population.

Mr Casey, thank you very much for the interview.

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