



John McCarthy, director of Global Corporate Consulting



Aleksandar Ruzicic, director of Global BioPharma Consulting

MDL pre-sales support and consulting are now consolidated into two groups. Global Corporate Consulting, under the direction of John McCarthy, focuses on defining and delivering informatics solutions for MDL's largest corporate customers. Global BioPharma Consulting, under the direction of Aleksandar Ruzicic, concentrates on all other life science customers and prospects worldwide (with the exception of Japan and South Korea). Molecular Connection talked to John and Aleks about how their organizations will help customers take full advantage of the latest discovery informatics strategies.

John McCarthy and Aleksandar Ruzicic

Delivering integrated discovery informatics strategies

What is the particular focus of Global Corporate Consulting?

John: Our group focuses on delivering global projects to large pharmaceutical companies with worldwide operations. We help large enterprises analyze their current R&D information systems, assist with developing new strategic concepts for global applications, and offer integrated solutions. MDL® Isentris™, the next-generation, three-tier discovery informatics architecture from MDL, is the platform on which we're building this new integrated approach to discovery informatics.

My team is heavily involved in transitioning global clients to the Isentris platform. This entails understanding each client's specific informatics needs and developing, with the client, appropriate application and system transition strategies to ensure that they get the greatest value from Isentris as they come on board. After analyzing the systems and architectures currently in place, we help clients assess what informatics projects they should take on—and when and how they should implement projects to take full advantage of Isentris.

Technology integration is the bottom line in everything we do, and this goes beyond a consideration of data alone to include a company's underlying business processes and the workflow applications used by scientists. By leveraging the metadata that customers collect—the data about their data—we can set up systems that help scientists “self-serve” when it comes to accessing data. Instead of relying on data specialists, scientists can use MDL integration technology to access the data they need, thereby accelerating and streamlining their workflows.

To assist in delivering globally- and regionally-based integration projects, the Corporate

Consulting team has representatives in both Europe and the United States. While speaking local languages and supporting local evaluations, we do concentrate on the global picture, however, because that is the primary perspective of our customer base.

What is the focus of Global BioPharma Consulting?

Aleks: Our clients are the biotechnology companies that use recombinant genetic engineering to develop products and the biopharmas that are using biology and chemistry together to develop products for human therapeutics, diagnostics, drug delivery, and cell and gene therapy. Our customers encompass many diverse market segments, including drug developers, Contract Research Organizations, HTS/combichem companies, and proteomics/genomics specialists.

We support customers worldwide, excepting only MDL's largest corporate customers (which are the responsibility of John's group) and customers in Japan and South Korea (where MDL Information Systems Japan KK offers full sales and service support). Our customers range from large, global enterprises through small to mid-sized companies, all the way to the smallest start-ups. The needs of our larger clients are similar to those of John's group, obviously with somewhat less complexity, because the companies we serve may not have such extensive global operations. Our smaller customers, on the other hand, tend to have distinct requirements. They typically want out-of-the-box solutions, very well integrated across all their research informatics needs, and the ability to deploy new technology quickly and to measure immediate productivity improvements.

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To meet these objectives, we have teams in Europe and the United States that deliver both small, local projects and larger international projects across multiple sites with the same responsiveness, attention to detail, and reliance on high industry-standard practices.

Why has MDL brought pre-sales and consulting into the Global Corporate and BioPharma Business groups?

John: To deliver successful integration projects, it's essential to present a consistent face to the customer during initial discussions, requirements gathering, solution design, and all the way through to implementation, testing, and training, whether the final project is a highly customized system or the simple installation and configuration of out-of-the-box software.

Aleks: Right... this unified approach helps MDL consultants to focus on and understand the unique technical and business needs of each customer—and to build a stronger relationship with the customer, in tandem with the Account Manager in charge. This continuity is critical to the accomplishment of yet another ongoing goal, which is to optimize the benefits customers receive from our products. We want scientists and developers alike to make better use of our products internally. By consolidating our technical experts into a single customer-facing organization, we gain a much better understanding of customers' needs, ensure smooth project implementations, and help customers identify effective ways to measure the value of their new systems on an ongoing basis.

John: Customers migrating to Isestris will benefit from this enhanced relationship management team and the expanded technical advisory role it fosters. The most important aspect of any transition is implementing the new technology and eliminating old systems in as non-disruptive a manner as possible. The answer to each organization's transition puzzle depends on its unique structure and needs—and MDL consultants are much better equipped to assess and address these items by virtue of our unified organization.

Aleks: For mid-size and smaller customers, our new, integrated organization will also help us better understand our customers' needs

for out-of-the-box solutions. For example, MDL® ChemBio AE was originally a consulting application, which we developed in direct response to customer needs for storing and retrieving chemical and biological data. We'll continue bringing solutions like this to market in the future.

What are the key products driving MDL informatics solutions for both your groups?

John: MDL Isestris is a crucial component of the discovery informatics strategy we are recommending for MDL's largest corporate customers. This technology is poised to take discovery informatics to the next level, and my team is eagerly awaiting the launch of the MDL® Base desktop application, which will complete the Isestris offering this year. We're also very interested in helping customers make better use of DiscoveryGateSM, the Web-based discovery environment from MDL. Our focus here is to make sure that the right people have access to the right data on DiscoveryGate, to ensure that research scientists are getting full value from this continually expanding and diversifying resource. Finally, we're also looking closely at developing synergies with other Elsevier products and technologies for the life science market. All of our customers depend on the primary scientific journals in their research, and Elsevier's ScienceDirect® digital library, EMBASE™ bibliographic database, and tailored EMSCOPES service can greatly enhance access to these critical resources.

Aleks: The biology solutions offered by the BioPharma group are particularly flexible, enabling customers to implement a wide range of assays, from high-throughput *in vitro* screening to highly complex and less standardized *in vivo* experiments. For example, MDL® Select offers an integrated workflow solution for smaller companies, which can include MDL ChemBio AE for chemistry registration, MDL® Plate Manager, and MDL® Assay Explorer with its new Partek statistical visualization tool. Our mid-sized customers have already started migrating to the Isestris technology. Actually, one of our largest Isestris-based consulting projects is with a biopharma customer that is leveraging the power of the MDL chemistry registration domain service (*Molecular Connection*, Vol. 22, No. 1, pg. 7). Customers also appreciate the advantages of our hosted

DiscoveryGate solution for accessing MDL® Available Chemicals Directory, the CrossFire Beilstein database, ChemInform Reaction Library, and the MDL® Metabolite and Toxicity Databases, to name just a few content products. They welcome the reduced need for equipment and IT support for constant database, software, and operating system upgrades, but are even more interested in improving productivity, making better decisions, and shortening discovery timelines. MDL consultants can assist all our customers in building informatics infrastructures that manage data and discovery workflows optimally, using high industry-standard practices. Working with MDL colleagues in Educational Services, we also ensure that scientists are fully trained, which is a critical success factor when rolling out information technology that affects day-to-day routines. (For more on this, see the article on MDL® Open Library on page 14 of this issue.)

What differentiates the solutions provided by your teams from those offered by other informatics providers?

Aleks: MDL and Elsevier provide a breadth of discovery informatics capabilities and a depth of experience that is unmatched in the industry. Collectively, our consultants offer many hundreds of years of experience in an industry that essentially began with the founding of MDL just over twenty-five years ago. Today we offer virtually everything a life sciences company needs to build an effective, integrated discovery operation, from underlying informatics infrastructure through scientific content to advanced experiment management and predictive science applications.

John: Combining MDL's expertise in capturing in-house experimental data with Elsevier's ability to deliver public information is really quite a unique advantage that no other company provides. The goal of Isestris is to bring these two key data sources to scientists in a unified way by fostering an integrated approach to content, applications, and technologies. Our consulting teams tap the wealth of a large and diverse organization to bring the most comprehensive solutions to customers—solutions based on MDL's proven expertise in discovery informatics, on Elsevier's abundant scientific content resources, and on powerful, integrated third-party technologies. ■