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Selvita: your integrated drug discovery partner of choice

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Abstract: Selvita is an integrated drug discovery biotechnology company with HQ and laboratories in Krakow, Poland. The company has two primary focus areas: to serve the drug discovery market as a customer centric provider of high quality, integrated drug discovery services and as a drug discovery company engaged in the research and development of breakthrough therapies in oncology. The company was established in 2007 and currently employs over 400 scientists, among which 30% are PhDs. Company offices are located in US (Boston, MA and San Francisco Bay Area), UK (Cambridge) and Poland (Krakow, Poznan). In its 10th anniversary, we would like to share the story how a small start-up from Krakow has become the biggest innovative biotechnology company in Eastern Europe.

Keywords: drug discovery, medical chemistry, biochemistry, cell and molecular biology biotechnology, biotech, CRO, Cambridge, Krakow, Poland

1. The success story

This year, Selvita will be celebrating a 10-year anniversary - sounds like a perfect time to tell a story which starts at a small start-up in Krakow (Poland) and takes us to where the heart of biotechnology beats: Cambridge (UK), Boston (US) and San Francisco (US).

Now, Selvita is one of the largest drug discovery companies in Europe with two primary focus areas: (i) to serve the drug discovery market as a customer centric provider of high quality, integrated drug discovery services, and (ii) as a drug discovery company engaged in the internal research and development of breakthrough therapies in oncology. Our GLP and GMP-certified labs are currently located in Krakow (Poland), where Selvita employs almost 400 scientists [1]. They are valuable collaborators and co-authors of numerous patents [1, 2] and publications [1, 3], actively supporting drug discovery efforts of all our customers and business partners.

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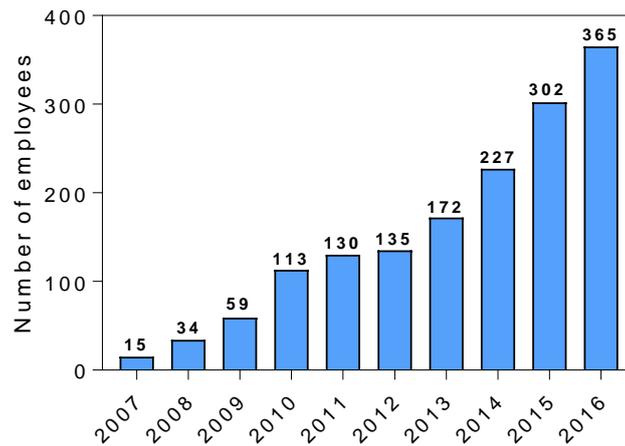


Figure 1. Increasing number of Selvita's employees between 2007 and 2016.

2. Where did it start

Selvita's story starts back in 2007, with two young, yet experienced entrepreneurs, who decided to put their professional lives upside-down and start from a scratch. That could be a starting story for many successful enterprises, but this one here is rather unique.

Pawel Przewiezlikowski and Boguslaw Sieczkowski, co-founders of Selvita, were at that time very successful IT specialists, who subsequently became Vice-Presidents of a leading Polish IT company, Comarch, managing hundreds of employees. But they had a dream of running a company of their own, which would fulfill the following three objectives: (i) working with highly skilled and intelligent people, (ii) doing it in Krakow, and (iii) creating something that would benefit the whole society. They searched and stumbled upon biotechnology. An industry which you could consider rather exotic and non-existent in Polish reality at that point. The journey from Vice-President of a leading IT company, to a CEO and COO of a rapidly developing biotech company sounds like an improbable one, but the founders of Selvita proved it wrong.



Figure 2. From left to right:
Boguslaw Sieczkowski (COO) and Pawel Przewiezlikowski (CEO).

3. Our technology

Selvita provides both fully integrated and stand-alone drug discovery and development services in three key areas: (i) computer-aided drug discovery, (ii) medicinal chemistry, and (iii) in vivo/ in vitro biology.

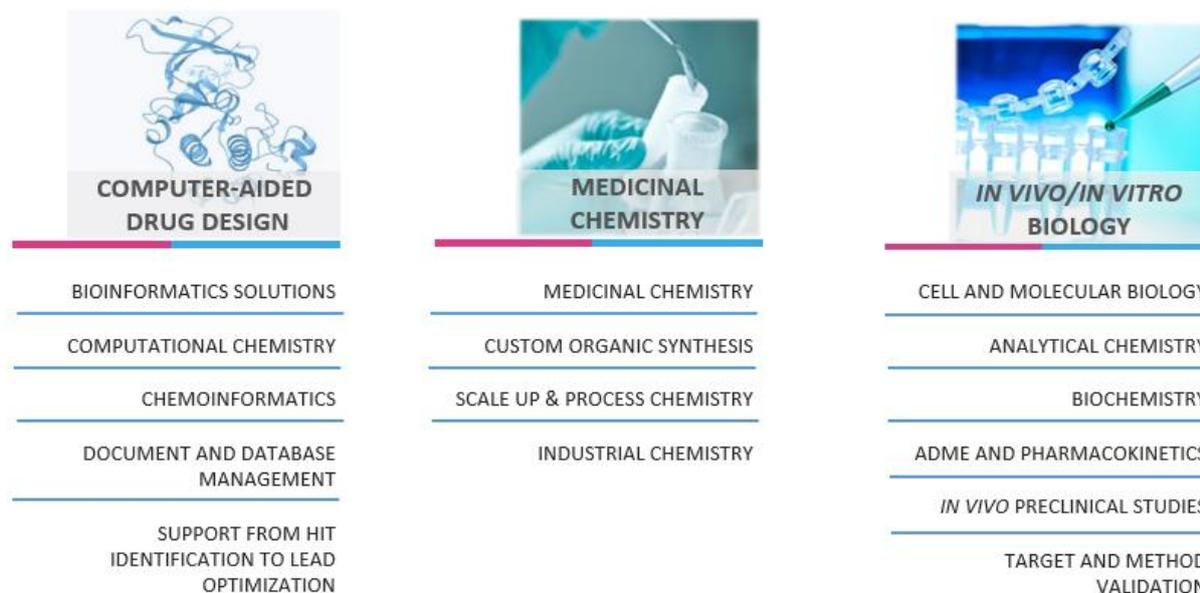


Figure 2. Selvita's drug discovery and development services.

4. The journey so far

Selvita has a long history of proving to the world that 'Yes, we can. And yes, we'll do it the best it can be done'. It was not an easy journey, but we would not be where we are if it was not for our partners and customers who gave us a chance to prove that we can do what we claim.

In 2009, two years after Selvita had started, we were hitting it off in the Polish market. Business was great and on the rise. But selling services outside of Poland was truly a challenge. Not many people knew where Poland was, and even if they did, they certainly did not associate it with blooming biotech or research industry. But there comes the breakthrough, and as it usually is, it took a lot of hard work, and one very important customer, a European big pharma, to give us a chance to enter the elite European biotech world. This trust that was offered us in 2009, we have not broken to this today, and soon we will be completing eight years of cooperation with the first global customer who has entrusted us with their chemistry projects.

From there, our business started spreading globally. Selvita was growing both its customer base and its capabilities, to truly call itself an integrated drug discovery services provider offering high quality medicinal chemistry support coming with synthesis, process chemistry, discovery biology including bespoke assays' development, gene to structure services, *in vitro* genotoxicity, ADME-DMPK and so on.

Very dynamic business growth and development, aided by Selvita's IPO and thus substantial investment into the company, led us to consider spreading out and opening offices in our key markets.

At this point, we had already achieved several important milestones in Europe and realized that to realize Selvita's growth potential, we needed to take a leap across both the English Channel and the Atlantic, and blend into the local biotech communities in the United Kingdom and United States.

The United Kingdom is the third largest global R&D market. Biotechnology clusters are springing up around the country. Selvita's mission is to help our partners to maximize productivity and lower costs of product discovery and development, and Cambridge (UK) which is a home to the leading scientific organizations, seemed like a perfect starting point for the Selvita-UK story. The idea to set up an office in the UK came up in December 2014 and very quickly materialized in May 2015, when the company was registered and started its operations on British soil. Selvita, well recognized in most of the countries of continental Western Europe and in the US, was a completely new member of the UK Life-Science community at that time. The primary aim was, therefore, to increase the visibility and identify partners who could benefit from Selvita's presence in the UK. Building trust and developing a relationship is a long and gradual process that requires time and attention. Pharma and biotech companies in the UK have a variety of options available when it comes to outsourcing of either a complex drug discovery project or a stand-alone piece of work, like the synthesis of a compound or development of an assay. So far, they might have considered local providers or completely remote ones in Asia, all of them offering different advantages, having different pros and cons. In 2015 Selvita establishing its presence in the UK, has brought a completely new option for outsourcing decision-makers to consider: Western European quality services at Eastern European prices. With a multidisciplinary international team of over 400 passionate scientists, all speaking English, operating in cutting-edge laboratories in Poland, Krakow (only a 2 hour flight from London) Selvita combines all the features that are desirable: deep expertise in drug discovery process and price advantages. Selvita still being a medium size CRO offers a creative and flexible approach to the drug discovery process and bespoke solutions and time savings due to having discovery biology and chemistry next door to each other, working closely and proactively. Close time zone, easy access to Krakow (several direct flights a day) makes even a one day trip from the UK to Selvita's labs feasible. If we add excellent communication and a problem-solving approach, it becomes clear how Selvita has been able to grow so rapidly within the last 10 years. And although it was initially a real challenge to attract the attention of a competitive and sophisticated British market, we are proud to say that we have already developed several great relationships locally with pharma and biotech companies located within "the Golden Triangle" and beyond. It was possible thanks to win-win relations with our partners who appreciated all the hard work and recommended us locally. Thus, we have the motivation to work even harder! If we were to name one thing that we have learned over all these years, this would be that nothing can be achieved without the right partners. As we would not be where we are if it was not for all our partners and customers, we ourselves try and add value to every single project we conduct. We do not limit ourselves to just processing the request, we consult, we optimize and we do all we can for our partner to receive more than they asked for. Outsourcing is about

accessing additional skillsets and reducing internal costs, but at Selvita we make sure that at the same time we add value to the project.

5. Looking to the future

Selvita is continuously developing. In 2015 – 2016 we have opened three foreign offices in Cambridge, UK, Greater Boston Area and San Francisco Bay Area in the US. Moreover, in September 2016 we have announced a ten-year development plan which assumes that Selvita will build a laboratory-office complex, made up of three buildings with a total space of 150,000 sq. ft., which will accommodate work places for ca. 1,000 employees, in Krakow. We are continuously investing in infrastructure, employees and customer service, as we aim to become the integrated drug discovery services provider of choice for the global biotechnology, pharmaceutical, and chemical industry.



Figure 4. Selvita's labs in Krakow, Poland.

The company



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<http://www.selvita.com/>

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Natalia Baranowska is a Marketing Manager at Selvita responsible for all marketing activities, as well as external communications of the Company.



Alicja Matysiak was responsible for the establishment of Selvita's BD office in Cambridge in 2015. Currently Alicja represents Selvita in the UK and Ireland and is responsible for building business relationships between Selvita and clients spanning from small biotech to mid-size and large pharmaceutical companies, drug discovery charities, agrochemical companies and academic institutions.



Karolina Zapadka is a Biotech Business Developer, Physical Science Consultant and Physical Chemist. Her academic work includes a double research Master diploma in Chemistry with a specialisation in Spectroscopy and Photochemistry from Jagiellonian and Lund University, a Ph.D. from University of Cambridge in Biophysics, Peptide Stability & Aggregation and Postdoctoral work between University of Cambridge and MedImmune. Karolina has a scientific background in several areas, including metabolic disorders, pharmaceutical product development, biologics stability & liquid formulations, protein self-assembly, cancer diagnostics, and polymer chemistry. For the past 8 years, she has been actively involved in Cambridge cluster, working for 2 years in the Cambridge based emerging biotech company Arecor. After industry, she went on to pursue a PhD at Chemistry Department, University of Cambridge. Karolina was funded by the Formulation Science Group in MedImmune. Working in MedImmune for more than 5 years, has given her experience in Big Pharma. Moreover, Karolina has extensive experience in valorisation of research outcomes in life science & healthcare together with business development in the private and non-profit sectors. She has lead successful high performance teams of up to 120 people in innovation in 15+ projects in several non-profit organisations. During this time, she has established, managed, and maintained a strong relationship of trust with different partners regionally, nationally, and internationally. Since early 2017 she has been Chief Executive and name partner of KLUZ Consulting, the bioinnovation business builder, which provides technical and strategy consulting services. Here, she worked on number of consulting projects for biotech companies, science parks and Business Schools.

