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A Leader IN Dentistry

Worldwide leader in dental technology and equipment Sirona Dental has grown substantially over the past decade and has plans for growth to continue.

Images courtesy of Sirona Dental

After starting his career on Wall Street in the heyday of the 80s, Jeffrey T. Slovin, now CEO of Sirona Dental Systems, Inc., understands how important teamwork, focus, and leadership are to an organisation. After years of advising other companies on mergers and acquisitions, Jeffrey moved into the business world himself, working in a number of industries before becoming president and director of Schick Technologies, Inc. in 1999. In 2005, Schick agreed to merge with Sirona and in 2013 Jeffrey became CEO. Sirona is publicly traded on NASDAQ (under the ticker SIRO), has a market capitalisation of over

US\$5.5 billion and over a billion dollars in revenues.

The CEO Magazine spoke to Jeffrey about how he turned around Schick Technologies and grew Sirona Dental, why innovation is so essential to its success, and what the future holds for the company.

***The CEO Magazine:* What makes a good leader?**

Jeffrey: Growing up, I was blessed with the opportunity to play multiple competitive sports, which taught me what it truly means to be part of a team and to win as a team. I'm a big believer that teamwork, giving great effort, and building trust drive the success of

an organisation. As a leader, I believe it is not only one's duty to put his or her colleagues in a position to win, but also to bring out the best in them. I view my role as more of a coach looking for ways to improve the individual and the team. I need to determine the right players, communicate a clear game plan, and insure that they're prepared and motivated to execute on it. That said, I also need to make difficult decisions, quickly and decisively.

Just like a team competing for a common goal, an effective leader creates a set of common values and a clear vision for the future. With this shared focus, everyone can make better decisions in the >





SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR IDEAS



Headquartered in Zandt, Germany, Zollner Elektronik AG, a family-owned company has successfully grown to become one of the largest EMS (Electronic Manufacturing Services) providers in the world today. By continuously investing in our own organic growth, the Zollner Group has evolved into a mechatronics service provider.

Support along the complete value chain – from customer-specific development and design at the start of the product lifecycle, throughout the prototype and serial production phase, including supply chain management, all the way to refurbishment and after-sales service.

Sirona – the world’s largest manufacturer of dental technology and the clear innovation leader in dentistry – has been

a customer of Zollner’s since 2011. We work in close partnership during the production phase. Our best-cost-country approach includes production sites in Romania and Germany where we produce electronic components for Sirona. More locations are to follow.

Regardless whether the customer makes use of our complete know-how along the entire value chain, or just a part, one can depend on us as a partner, regardless of the sector in which one operates.

Zollner’s global presence includes 8,790 employees at 18 sites in Germany, Hungary, Romania, Switzerland, Tunisia, the USA, Costa Rica, China and Hong Kong.



best interest of the group. In fact, I would argue that focus for an organisation is a significant competitive advantage. If you can combine a corporate culture of employees that believe in each other and support each other with a direct focus on the goals of the organisation, you’ll have people who have accountability and strive for operational excellence. In the end, it’s the people that really make a difference. It is their talents, focus, and efforts that will drive the success of the organisation. Often, the best ideas come from your team. As the head of an organisation, listening is sometimes just as important as leading.

How did Schick Technologies and Sirona come together?

After rebuilding Schick Technologies from the brink of bankruptcy to a highly profitable market leader within dental imaging, we had to evaluate the next natural step for the company. It quickly became clear that it made sense for us to leverage our organisation and technology to expand our footprint through either buying other companies or finding a partner. In 2005, we agreed to do a reverse merger with Sirona. Sirona was a large German-based organisation that had a long and storied history in dental. It was a major competitor and the ability to turn a competitor into an ally not only accomplished

our goal of growing into a stronger organisation, but also created a key competitive advantage for both companies.

As part of the merger agreement, I joined Sirona as the executive vice president and a board member, then in 2010 was promoted to president, and in 2013 the board of directors appointed me as CEO. Today, Sirona is the leading dental technology company in the world, selling products in over 135 countries with 3,300 employees working at 29 locations worldwide. We have a full range of dental equipment and software solutions and our passion is advancing dentistry. It’s been an exciting 16 years for me in dental, and what’s been most rewarding has been growing from a niche player into a global dental brand.

What has been your focus as CEO of Sirona?

My focus has been to continue growing our top and bottom line, investing in R&D to maintain our competitive technological advantage, and driving customer satisfaction.

Dentistry is evolving into a digital world and Sirona has positioned itself to take advantage of these trends. With over a billion in sales, and the market leader in digital dentistry, our growth is driven by driving adoption of our



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- Jeffrey T. Slovin

technologies and expanding the market, which is no easy task. We have expanded our global footprint, consistently delivered best-in-class products to dentists, and work tirelessly to achieve our goals.

We are fortunate to have established such a strong brand at Sirona. When a dentist hears Sirona, he thinks about all the innovations we’ve brought to dentistry. So keeping a culture of innovation alive not only means investing in your people but it also means putting the money to work in R&D to allow our scientists and engineers to take on new challenges with the aim to help dentistry become better, safer, faster, and more productive for the dentist.

It’s also important that all of our employees understand and appreciate our customers’ needs because at Sirona, it’s everyone’s job to take care of the customer. We also need to be mindful that being in dental provides us the opportunity to really change patients’ lives. We’re all patients. We are in the unique position to improve dentistry and drive better oral health. I truly believe that >



treating our customers well goes a long way to driving long-term growth, increasing shareholder value and creating more opportunities ahead.

Sirona has won a number of awards for being one of the best employers in Europe. What do you think makes the company such a desirable place to work?

We make a concerted effort to support a culture that fosters innovation and following the best ideas. I make it clear to everyone that it doesn't matter what position or title you have within the organisation, if you have a great idea we want to hear it. We also invest in talent management, so our people can grow personally and professionally. We create opportunities for them to work around the world to learn and develop. Of course, it all starts with recruiting the best people, understanding where they want to go, and giving them the tools, education, training, and

opportunities for career development. We encourage the dialogue between different departments, and the exchange of ideas so they regularly gain exposure to other areas and really feel part of one global Sirona team.

We tell managers throughout the organisation that it is their responsibility to put people in a position to do their best. I fundamentally believe that if you're passionate about what you're doing and you're doing your best then you're a happier and more productive person.

Sirona has a long history of innovation in the dental industry. How important is that to the company?

Innovation is the hallmark of Sirona. It is one of the most important competitive advantages for us. We have a great brand that is synonymous with high-quality and innovative dental technologies. We continue to invest 5-7 per cent



of our sales into R&D. Continuing to have a culture of innovation is extremely important to us. In 2009, when most organisations were stopping their capital investments and cutting costs, we built our centre of innovation to not only extend our competitive lead but to signal to our employees and the market that we will not stop innovating. We've been around for over 100 years and we're going to do our best to insure that we're around for the next 100 years.

How does Sirona collaborate with suppliers to ensure success with innovation?

When you're an innovator you tend to be doing things where there aren't a lot of suppliers to choose from, and by definition it's cutting edge. Your relationship with your supplier is critical to being able to be lean and meet the demands of your customers. Supplier relationships are a key success factor and support our ability to introduce new products. Being able to collaborate with your suppliers and partner with them is a must to ensuring quality and managing costs. Our team is in constant discussion with our suppliers on how we can improve our processes, services, and products. We want our suppliers to enjoy success. You hear often in business about win-win, but when you're an innovative company, if your suppliers aren't winning with you then there's likely a problem waiting to occur.

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- Jeffrey T. Slovin



How has the company grown over its existence, and what is the plan for the future?

We've consistently positioned ourselves to be at the forefront of the fastest growing areas of the market, and today it's the evolution to digital dentistry. Dental is still transitioning from film to digital as we've already seen in the medical world and even in our very own cameras. More and more dentists realise the importance of being able to do something digitally, and more and more patients are demanding it. X-rays are improving with the growth of digital and 3D imaging, which means lower radiation and better diagnoses for the patient, resulting in improved treatment planning. Our CAD/CAM product CEREC has revolutionised the patient experience, enabling a restoration to be done in a single

visit instead of multiple visits. The integration of our technologies enables practitioners to expand their practice and optimise the workflow. All of these technologies are in the early stages of penetration and we are confident that they will become the standard of care.

Sirona is the only proven digital solution out there with a track record over the past 30 years of being in digital dentistry. The adoption of our solutions will drive our future growth. It's an exciting time for us and the dental market. We're very passionate about digital dentistry because we believe that it is not only better and safer dentistry, but it also transforms the entire experience for the patient and practitioner. As I like to tell our team: the best is yet to come for Sirona! ●

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