

Client Profile

Learn how real businesses achieved success in their industries through innovative strategies such as expansion into new markets, new and differentiated product and service offerings, enhancing operations and cash flow management.

Namëna Biosciences bring scientific approach to nutraceutical industry

Innovation in business doesn't always mean inventing a completely new product. Sometimes it comes from introducing a better version of what's already out there or finding a better way to produce it.

That's the approach being taken by Mississauga-based Namëna Biosciences which wants to bring scientific rigour to its line of nutraceuticals, products which are generally classified as dietary supplements that provide health benefits in addition to their own inherent nutritional value.

"We will be developing a scientific and clinical approach which will allow us to translate nutraceuticals into as yet underserved markets bringing the benefits of natural products to a wider range of people in a more scientific and rational manner," said Namëna CEO John S. Andrews whose own background is in drug discovery and development in the pharmaceutical industry.

"It hasn't really been done in the nutraceutical field before so we're trying to do that by raising the standards by putting together better formulations and better mixtures of preparations which can be used in multiple approaches," he said.

One of the first products introduced by Namëna was IGNITE-SX™, a supplement designed to improve sexual health for men and women. Andrews noted that there are many disorders that could potentially benefit from nutraceuticals such as malnourishment among children in developing and western countries, cachexia seen in patients undergoing cancer treatments, cognitive disorders and age-related ailments.

"We're looking at different areas at the moment where we intend to develop products where there will be clinical trial data to support them as an adjunct to other therapies or on their own and not just over-the-counter marketing products," he said.



Namëna CEO John S. Andrews and president Mohammed Benayoune have built a culture of innovation at Namena Chemicals, a biosciences company with a portfolio of proprietary technologies for chemical synthesis.
Cole Burston



“Nutraceuticals can be helpful if they are done correctly and applied correctly and there are disorders where there is no drug treatment where they can help ease and alleviate symptomatology, but you have to put them together in the right way with the correct mixtures and balances and data to support that.”

Andrews said that Namëna differs from its competitors by applying standards found in the pharmaceutical industry in nutraceutical production.

“In the field of nutraceuticals, there are a lot of products over the counter that have never been properly designed with real formulations that means you won’t actually get any benefit from them. This is insane because if you really want to get the benefits then you should know that you’re actually getting what is supposed to be in it,” he said.

He cited examples of nutraceutical products taken off the market because they were independently analyzed to find they didn’t actually contain the ingredients they claimed, had inaccurate formulations or were even contaminated with undesirable ingredients.

Andrews noted that Health Canada has tightened the rules around over-the-counter formulations, but said they are still nowhere near as stringent as those for drug registration.

“I don’t think we’ll ever see that,” he said, “but there are nutraceutical products that can be developed as a sort of in-between so they become a therapy in their own right and for that you would need clinical data and when I say clinical data, I don’t mean a marketing study, I mean real clinical data.”

“There was a time when you could basically stick anything in a bottle and sell it. Now, there is a regulatory process which has been started and which has been upgraded. There are more requirements for analytical data that was not there before and, for us, that’s fine because we’re doing things pharma grade,” he said.

Namëna has been in operation for 15 years and in recent years has begun diversifying into separate, but interconnected, divisions. In addition to Namëna Biosciences, the company also operates Namëna Chemicals, Namëna Analytical and Namëna Energy.

The chemicals division works on developing intermediates and catalysts which assist the biosciences division’s drug manufacturing processes, but also helps the energy division as it works on hydrogen storage research while the analytics division ties everything together with data analysis.

“What you try to do is understand what is your key strengths are and look to see what market they can be applied in,” said Andrews. “If it’s a very different type of market, you need a different type of company or approach, so our diversification helps with that and it is not a random diversification and is actually linked based on our expertise in chemicals and pharma.”

Andrews is optimistic that their scientific approach and diversification strategy will continue to fuel growth at Namëna.

“The key thing is that everybody has innovative ideas,” he said. “There is never any shortage of innovative ideas; the issue is are you going to implement them or not? It’s amazing how much does not happen as opposed to what does happen.”



CIBC Tips – Different Ways to Innovate

Diversify Your Offering: Use your core skills to offer complementary business services. Look for an unmet customer need and underserved segments where you can use your core competencies to develop new products and solutions.

Redefine Your Process: Innovate by redesigning your processes in order to provide greater efficiency, reduce production time and increase the quality of your products.

Expand Your Reach: Look for opportunities to sell your products or services in other industries and in other distribution channels. This can help you generate new revenues without having to introduce something new.

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