

Swift buying decision

Southern Cross Dental expands to include onshore denture manufacturing

By Danny Chan

The market value of the Australian dental prosthetics market, estimated at around \$354.9m in 2020, is predicted to surpass \$500m by 2027. Growing at a rate of 6.3%, the total value is composed of revenues from the dental crown, bridge and denture markets.

Southern Cross Dental's resolve to grow its presence in the latter market is strengthened by its July acquisition of Swift Dental Laboratory, the former supplier of SCD's Australia-made denture range.

Natural progression

With the market for dentures booming, and expected to grow further in years to come, Southern Cross identified onshore denture manufacturing capacity as a strategic priority. This was in response to growing consumer demand for locally produced prosthetics.

The Swift acquisition was, in many ways, a natural progression for SCD. For about 5 years, the mid-sized Sydney-based lab had been a reliable outsource partner responsible for producing SCD's popular Quest denture range.



James Squirrell, CEO of Modern Dental Pacific



Jonathan Evans, General Manager of Southern Cross Dental

The good working relationship and Swift's high quality wares made it a straightforward decision when it came time for SCD to take on in-house denture manufacturing.

"Swift Dental has been a strong partner for many years. When the opportunity arose to bring them into the fold as part of the Southern Cross family, we jumped on it," says James Squirrell, CEO of Modern Dental Pacific, SCD's parent company.

The acquisition of a denture-focused Australian lab, Squirrell says, really boils down to raising product quality and service reliability.

"From a dentist's point of view, there's a particular need with dentures to have consistent and fast turnaround speeds. Their patients, with missing teeth, often need a fast solution for a new or replacement denture," he says.

"Swift's facility, located about 5km from our head office, allows us to make that work onshore with much faster delivery times.

"Along with a proven track record for producing high quality dentures, Swift's team of nine technicians – pretty good size for Aussie standards – can turn around the high volume we require at a fast pace."

Technological springboard

Established in 1983, Southern Cross Dental is one of the country's foremost dental labs. Integration with Modern Dental in 2015 helped the Australian lab gain invaluable access to a wealth of technological resources from the world leader in the production of dental prostheses, orthodontics and anti-snoring devices.

Through the global affiliation, Squirrell wants to see Southern Cross raise the technological bar for locally produced dentures.

"Broadly speaking, the technology around how you make dentures is evolving very quickly in the last couple of years, especially in regards to the use of mills and 3D printers. Buying Swift allows us to be at the forefront of this development," he adds.

"The acquisition also serves as an Australian springboard to develop international technologies and processes in our own backyard while growing the denture side of the business."



Ready for the future

Where processes and protocols are concerned, Swift Dental operated largely as a traditional lab. Nonetheless, the Swift team boasts a collection of skillsets that will help accelerate the adoption of future technologies.

"Our new team members have exceptional denture-making experience. They were one of the biggest attractions of the acquisition. The lab manager William Perez, for example, has decades of experience and is an influential figure in

the denture market," says Jonathan Evans, General Manager of Southern Cross Dental.

"With the technological expertise of Modern Dental behind us, these individuals provide a core set of skills to help transition our denture-making abilities into the digital future."

The Peakhurst facility further promises immense growth potential.

"With some adjustments to office space, the building has the capacity to allow a threefold increase in the workforce," he reveals. "We have great plans to invest significantly in both our people and our facility, to create a world class denture lab."



Hybrid model

The Swift acquisition also boosts SCD's Made in Australia credentials, which appeals to customers who want to support Aussie-made products, along with local businesses and jobs.

"Everything we do is about providing choice to our customers, whether it is how fast they get the product back, their choice of materials or where the product is made," Squirrell says.

"Our hybrid model works really well in terms of giving customers more options. The combination of specialised manufacturing in Sydney and Melbourne combined with the reliability and scale of offshore work provides us with an unbeatable product offering."

With in-house denture manufacturing capabilities, SCD is finally able to commit to the same quality assurance standards that the lab's crown and bridge customers already enjoy.

"With Swift on board, we can fully apply the SCD stamp on denture manufacturing as we have for crown and bridge production," Evans assures.

SCD has been producing crowns, bridges, implants as well as mouthguards and splints for a long time. Now they have the capacity and expertise to give their denture customers even better quality control, consistent turnaround and competitive pricing.

"I'm personally excited to be involved with Southern Cross at this time," Evans says.

"For now, all I can say is: Watch this space!" ♦

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