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A Tour Made in France: Cosmetic Valley

GCI magazine spent a week exploring Cosmetic Valley in France and learned about products, processes and the importance of being “Made in France.”

Cosmetic Valley is an organization created with Silicon Valley in mind. Based in Chartres, France, literally across the street from the famous Chartres cathedral, Cosmetic Valley is all about the promotion of domestic cosmetics firms—which together comprise a significant part of France’s gross domestic product.

While not as geographically close as companies in Silicon Valley, members of Cosmetic Valley—and there are a few hundred—know that they are in a group that brings together a diverse range of companies ensconced in the beauty industry. Members vary from brand owners such as Guerlain to spray mechanism and packaging specialists such as Valois to active ingredient providers such as Sederma.

For one week in September, *GCI* magazine publisher Dave Brambert and European representative Jane Evison trekked across western France, through Orleans and Paris, and came away with an update on technologies, markets and company initiatives to share with *GCI* magazine readers.

Sederma

Sederma (Le Perray en Yvelines, France) was one of the first companies to join Cosmetic Valley. Founded in 1964 and purchased by Croda in 1997, the firm is known for active ingredients and fine chemicals. Even those who are familiar with the company might be surprised by the scope of Sederma’s labs and testing. Research facilities include *in vitro* and *in vivo* testing, with cell cultures harvested from humans and multiplied in the labs. A “pool” of cells is always on hand. DNA array testing and RNA extraction is done internally and with the help of a partner. The testing allows Sederma staff to see which genes are activated or suppressed by a certain ingredient. Additionally, Sederma is currently researching animal test alternatives, has a wide-ranging antiaging project and is even looking at cosmetotextiles.

Valois

Products from closure and pump spray specialist Valois (Le Neubourg, France) were spotted throughout the ensuing tours of Cosmetic Valley members. A very large and very clean manufacturing facility makes many standard products, and a design staff answers unique customer challenges—such as making a spray head in the form of a rough gem or an apple stem. Hot areas include mini-systems for samples and hidden tubes (optically practically invisible, matching the refractive index of the liquid). Company sources say about two-thirds of Valois’ business is foreign—its efforts in packaging help to truly deliver the much-desired “Made in France” moniker to products.

BioGalenys

BioGalenys is a small startup firm that is working with Cosmetic Valley and its constituents to perform research in a brand new facility in Miserey, France. The company’s current workload

is dominated by skin cell research and detection of unwanted substances in products. Eventually, the firm would like to do its own original research toward product innovations.

Sagal

Sagal (Beaucouzé, France) is, in part, a contract manufacturer that is part of Intercosmetiques, which itself is part of Alkos Développement. Started with input from top fragrance marketers, the firm’s services range from screen printing fragrance bottles to hot melt process for lipstick and deodorants to soap-forming to R&D. Three major areas keep the lines humming: skin care, color cosmetics and body care. Sagal uses highly automated methods in its manufacturing process, and works to recoup ingredients otherwise lost to normal process write-offs.

Guerlain

Guerlain (Chartres) is well-known for its high-end cosmetics. As one may expect with this category, the company employs a mix of very high-tech manufacturing and processes done with great care by hand. The company’s double-milled color cosmetics, powders in a ball format (its Meteorite line), and pressed compact cosmetics are among its showcase products. The Meteorite production line has much in common with candy production, in fact. Fully 30% of its products are new launches during any particular year. In 2008, perfumer Thierry Wasseur (who spent years at Firmenich) was appointed as the first non-Guerlain family chief perfumer; one of the creations of this move is the new fragrance *Idylle* (see additional Guerlain coverage in *Fragrance Focus*, Page 13).

Pacific Création

Operating manager Dominique Force designed the new France location of Pacific Création (Chartres). From money-saving, green-friendly skylights to GMP processes and packaging innovation, everything about Pacific Création’s manufacturing are in tune with modern manufacturing trends. Positive air pressure barriers isolate fragrance handling, and clean is the theme for the entire operation. Flexible assembly lines allow quick and simple product changeover, and the entire building leaves plenty of room for growth. The company’s popular *Lolita Lempicka* line comes from this facility.

Caudalie

A brand available through spas and high-end retailers, Caudalie (St. Jean de Braye, France) was started in the mid-1990s, the result of research on grapes at the University of Bourdeaux. The resulting polyphenol-based products are sold in the company’s five spas, select pharmacies, and at Sephora and Nordstrom. France represents 65% of its business. Besides its expertise in resveratrol, the company leverages “green” as a prime directive—from product development to paperless order processing, all the way to the warehouse (where it reuses and recycles to create savings in shipping). Ethical and

sustainable efforts go all the way to company cars, which aim to reduce the transport carbon footprint by 20%.

Glycodiag

Created in 2005 as an incubator under the auspices of the University of Orleans in Chevilly, France, and headed by Ludovic Landemarre, PhD, Glycodiag specializes in glycobiology, finding bio-markers for the cosmetic and pharmaceutical markets. Using raw materials and their extracts as a starting point, Glycodiag looks at polysaccharides and studies how skin changes are dictated by sugar component changes. Activities such as finding "mimic" polysaccharides and finding the bio-marker that would show efficacy of a natural antimicrobial or antiaging substance are also on the firm's agenda. Glycodiag works in partnership with the smallest research firms and the largest manufacturers in beauty.

LVMH

Said to be the largest cosmetic R&D site in Europe, about 55 hectares of development space for perfumes, makeup, skin care and perfume derivatives comprise the headquarters of LVMH (St. Jean de Braye, France). Executive vice president of R&D Eric Perrier notes that the firm creates about 20 patents a year; current count is about 300 patents. Much emphasis is placed on actives and fundamental research, but its largest goal is to be innovative, partnering where necessary. "We do not have 'Not Invented Here' syndrome," Perrier notes. In fact, the second largest budget item for the research area is outside research. LVMH works with partners in Cosmetic Valley and universities across the globe to do advanced research. The company will maintain these partnerships while building its own state-of-the-art research center designed to allow it to tackle problems in skin biology and botanical ingredients.

L'Herboretum

Alban Muller, who is familiar to some readers as the president of Alban Muller International (Vincennes, France), has another life at another location. L'Herboretum in Saint-Ay, France, is an island of biodiversity that both preserves the multitude of plants and animals contained within and teaches others about the birds and bees (and bats and chickens) and the flora at L'Herboretum. Many of these plants have a role in cosmetics, as do some natural animal products such as honey (an apiary is tucked into the property).

Créations Couleurs

Alain Saintrond, president of color cosmetic supplier Créations Couleurs in Dreux, France, notes that business is picking up dramatically. "We had a record August [2009]," he says, "and our biggest challenge is getting our suppliers to deliver [more quickly]." Saintrond has just completed another building in Dreux; it is designed with workflow efficiency and GMP in mind. It also houses a training center, which, according to Saintrond, is drawing the top manufacturers to learn about color ingredients. Créations Couleurs' new line of fine-milled, high color content ingredients was launched at the Beyond Beauty show in Paris.



Photos are available at www.GCI magazine.com.



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