

Medtech mergers still the driving force behind jobs changes



[Elizabeth Cairns](#)

The wave of consolidation that swept through the medtech industry over the past couple of years has largely dissipated, but its effects are still being felt in the jobs market. Megamergers and divestments announced some time ago have only closed in the past year, and the changes in staffing levels are only now emerging.

Of the top 10 companies that expanded their workforce in terms of sheer numbers, seven did so as a result of buying other groups. With M&A activity slowing in recent months, particularly at the top end, changes in the medtech jobs market might be less pronounced in future (see tables below).

The analyses consider only those companies that obtain 40% or more of their revenues from sales of medical devices.

Among the cohort of largest medtech groups, those whose headcounts have increased most in the last year are of course acquirers. Zimmer finds itself with a workforce 75% larger after the closure of its \$13.4bn acquisition of Biomet; this deal, announced in April 2014, kicked off the mergermania that characterised the medtech industry over the following 18 months or so.

The two orthopaedics companies being so similar, even being headquartered in the same small Indiana town, meant that the Zimmer Biomet merger took some time to close – a year and two months – partly so divestitures required for FTC approval could be completed.

Similarly, Becton Dickinson grew 62% in 2015 after absorbing the drug delivery group CareFusion in a deal announced nearly two years ago. And St. Jude Medical gained an extra 2,000 staff after buying Thoratec, growing 22%.

Smith & Nephew, which saw the fourth-largest expansion of its workforce in percentage terms, can point to organic growth for most of its headcount increase. It added around 350 new employees thanks to its purchase of the Russian company DeOst and DC's trauma and orthopaedics business; the other 850 new recruits did not come via a buy.

Employee numbers of the top 15 medtech companies by market cap									
Company	Market cap YE 2015 (\$m)	No. of employees at year end						% change 2010-15	% change 2014-15
		2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015		
Medtronic	107,612	45,000	45,000	46,000	49,000	92,000	88,000	96%	(4%)
Abbott Laboratories	66,137	90,000	91,000	91,000	69,000	77,000	74,000	(18%)	(4%)
Stryker	34,667	20,036	21,241	22,010	25,000	26,000	27,000	35%	4%
Becton Dickinson	32,466	28,803	29,369	29,555	29,979	30,619	49,517	72%	62%
Essilor International	27,021	38,112	48,700	50,688	55,129	58,032	60,883	60%	5%
Boston Scientific	24,832	25,000	24,000	24,000	23,000	24,000	25,000	0%	4%
Baxter International	20,893	48,000	48,500	51,000	61,000	66,000	50,000	4%	(24%)
Zimmer Biomet	20,795	8,800	8,700	9,300	9,500	10,000	17,500	99%	75%
Intuitive Surgical	20,426	1,660	1,924	2,362	2,792	2,978	3,211	93%	8%
Coloplast	17,716	7,284	7,372	7,875	8,563	9,250	9706	33%	5%
St. Jude Medical	17,509	15,000	16,000	15,000	16,000	16,000	18,000	20%	22%
Edwards Lifesciences	17,012	7,000	7,800	8,200	8,600	9,100	9,800	38%	8%
Smith & Nephew ¹	16,295	10,172	10,743	10,477	11,036	13,468	14,686	44%	9%
C. R. Bard	13,961	11,700	12,100	12,200	13,000	13,900	14,900	27%	7%
Hologic	11,303	4,220	5,019	6,157	5,615	5,351	5,290	25%	(1%)

1Numbers are averages for the year

The story is mirrored among companies that saw their staff count shrink. The biggest faller was Baxter International, shedding 16,000 jobs thanks to its spin-out of Baxalta.

Things will reshape themselves again in the year to come. Abbott is to close its \$25bn acquisition of St. Jude Medical – its \$6bn purchase of diagnostics group Alere is looking less certain – and Stryker’s purchase of Physio-Control will also shake up staff numbers.

A look at the biggest expansion in percentage terms across all companies is, again, an acquisition. When Cyberonics bought Sorin it added nearly 4,000 workers, expanding 612%. There was an iffy moment when the deal ran into a legal challenge, but this only delayed the transaction. When the deal closed Cyberonics changed its name to LivaNova ([Legal challenge to Sorin-Cyberonics deal calls for careful handling, July 27, 2015](#)).

Top 10 headcount increases of the last year

By percentage of staff added			By number of staff added		
Name	% added	2015 headcount	Name	Number added	2015 headcount
LivaNova	612%	4,700	Becton Dickinson	18,898	49,517
Exact Sciences	187%	677	Zimmer Biomet	7,500	17,500
Nevro	133%	308	Steris	6,400	14,000
Wright Medical Group	94%	2,295	LivaNova	4,040	4,700
Steris	84%	14,000	Essilor International	2,851	60,883
Zimmer Biomet	75%	17,500	Hill-Rom	2,675	10,000
Vermillion	74%	54	St. Jude Medical	2,000	18,000
Lepu Medical Technology	74%	4,321	Smith & Nephew	1,218	14,686
OvaScience	67%	87	Wright Medical Group	1,115	2,295
Becton Dickinson	62%	49,517	Straumann	1,084	3,471

Reassuringly, the two next strongest-growing companies made no acquisitions. Exact Sciences' 131% increase in staff numbers across its financial 2014 has been overshadowed by an even faster growth rate in the past year: the company nearly trebled in size and now has 677 workers. In 2010 it had just 35.

And neurostimulation group Nevro more than doubled in size thanks to FDA approval of its Senza spinal cord stimulation system, awarded in May 2015. Reimbursement followed in December.

But after that it is back to the buyers: Wright Medical and Steris closed their acquisitions of Tournier and Synergy Health, respectively, and Zimmer Biomet and Becton Dickinson appear once more.

Top 10 headcount reductions of the last year

By percentage of staff cut			By number of staff cut		
Name	% cut	2015 headcount	Name	Number cut	2015 headcount
GI Dynamics	(48%)	36	Baxter International	(16,000)	50,000
Sunshine Heart	(31%)	38	Medtronic	(4,000)	88,000
Baxter International	(24%)	50,000	Gerresheimer	(412)	10,684
Mauna Kea Technologies	(24%)	91	Getinge	(323)	15,424
Stentys	(18%)	33	Dentsply Sirona	(200)	11,400
Cogentix Medical	(15%)	181	Haemonetics	(128)	3,255
Derma Sciences	(13%)	263	Ambu	(116)	2,225
Nanosphere	(12%)	148	Conmed	(100)	3,400
TearLab	(11%)	118	Hologic	(61)	5,290
EKF Diagnostics	(8%)	365	Derma Sciences	(40)	263

The two companies who cut the greatest percentages of their staff have not spun out units, nor have they been

buffeted by macro trends. Instead their technologies have run into trouble. GI Dynamics was forced to abandon its intestinal liner EndoBarrier after the device, designed to treat obesity, was linked with a dangerously high rate of hepatic abscess ([GI Dynamics has nothing up its sleeve, July 31, 2015](#)). Having halved its workforce last year, it would not be a surprise to see GI Dynamics shrink further in years to come.

Sunshine Heart has twice halted enrolment in the pivotal US trial of its heart failure device C-Pulse. And in March this year investors were aghast when it emerged that the product, which had previously been described as minimally invasive, in fact required a sternotomy to implant. The company has been on a costcutting drive ever since.

While the occasional technological hit or miss can lead to a medtech company adding or cutting staff the single greatest trend behind staff changes is without a doubt M&A activity – even activity first announced some years ago.

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