Chapter XI

Telemedicine in Practice: Comitas Comunicaciones S. A.

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Abstract

The case of Comitas Comunicaciones is a clear example of corporate entrepreneurship in the telecommunications sector. This firm was founded to offer telecommunications services in general and telecommunications services applied to telemedicine in particular. Comitas exploits business opportunities in the health care sector that no other firm is currently focusing on adequately. As the case develops, the technical and market difficulties that the firm has faced will become apparent. The role of the incubator firm is particularly important in this case, since it has provided Comitas with resources, capabilities, and technological knowledge that are complementary in the firm’s new activity: information and communications technologies services (ICT) to support telemedicine.
Background

Comitas Comunicaciones S.A. is a Spanish firm that offers integrated communications products and services in three highly specialized areas: communications, systems engineering, and telemedicine.

Founded in 1995 under the name of Tecnobit Comunicaciones, S.A., in the Tecnobit group, it remained a part of this group until 1999. The firm relaunched in 1999 as a limited company. It increased its capital, took on its current name, and moved to its current headquarters in Tres Cantos, in the outskirts of Madrid. Now independent from the Tecnobit group, Comitas sells telecommunications equipment and Inmarsat traffic.

Comitas began to offer services in a new market in 1996: that of telemedicine. It positioned itself as one of the most advanced firms in the world in its sector. It subsequently established a dedicated broadband network to serve telemedicine customers and other customers requiring its services because of their decentralization in multiple locations, such as large firms.

Since 1998 Comitas has been the Spanish distributor for the Norwegian firm NERA Satcom AS, a leading firm in the manufacture and commercialization of terrestrial, maritime, and Inmarsat satellite communications terminals. Moreover, thanks to its contract with the Norwegian operator Telenor Satellite Services AS, the firm is Inmarsat Service Provider (ISP) and Point of Service Activation (PSA) for Inmarsat. With these operations, Comitas has become the leading firm in the sale of equipment and traffic flow for Inmarsat communications in Spain.

In 2002, Comitas started operating commercially in depth in the telemedicine field, developing its TM-64 network, also known as the Thematic Health Network, which soon incorporated Military Health. The TM-64 network currently interconnects 51 health centers from different organizations. Comitas has also exploited its network and provided other value-added services to other companies, some outside the health care sector.

In short, Comitas is an innovative firm with its origins in the telecommunications sector—mainly the sale of satellite communications services—that exploits its technological resources and capabilities to adapt them to the health care sector, specifically to telecommunications services for the practice of telemedicine.

Telemedicine is part of eHealth, which involves the use of information technologies in the health care sector. The World Health Organization defines eHealth as the combined use in the health sector of electronic information and communications technology (transmission, storage, and recuperation of digitalized data) for clinical, educational, research, and administrative purposes, both at the local site and at a distance.
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